

# Isaiah Explained & Applied 23

Ger de Koning & Tony Jonathan



The Holy One of Israel



# **The Book of Isaiah**

## Explained and Applied



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The Holy One of Israel

Ger de Koning

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## **Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible**

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### **Old Testament**

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah  
Nah – Nahum  
Hab – Habakkuk  
Zep – Zephaniah  
Hag – Haggai  
Zec – Zechariah  
Mal – Malachi

### **New Testament**

Mt – Gospel of Matthew  
Mk – Gospel of Mark  
Lk – Gospel of Luke  
Jn – Gospel of John  
Acts – Acts of the Apostles  
Rom – Letter to the Romans  
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians  
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians  
Gal – Letter to the Galatians  
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians  
Phil – Letter to the Philippians  
Col – Letter to the Colossians  
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians  
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians  
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy  
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy  
Tit – Letter to Titus  
Phlm – Letter to Philemon  
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews  
Jam – Letter of James  
1Pet – First Letter of Peter  
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter  
1Jn – First Letter of John  
2Jn – Second Letter of John  
3Jn – Third Letter of John  
Jude – Letter of Jude  
Rev – Revelation

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

# **The Book of Isaiah**

## **Preface**

This commentary on the book of Isaiah is a revision of the commentary that was only available for download for a number of years on the internet. This revision concerns the insertion of the text of the Dutch Herziene Statenvertaling and an extension of the commentary. The reason for this is its publication in book form.

It has also become a commentary by two authors. By the way, this should be interpreted in a broader sense. The authors have gratefully used what the Lord had already shown to others about the contents of this Bible book. We leave it up to the reader to check for him- or herself on the basis of God's Word whether what is written in this commentary is indeed consistent with God's purpose (Acts 17:11).

In these times, when the church is characterized by great weakness and diverse needs and problems, we desperately need the prophetic word. It is proof of God's grace that He has given prophets. He sends prophets when the people deviate from Him. Their message has two sides: judgment on those who persist in their rejection of His Word and blessing for those who heed the prophet's call on God's behalf.

Anyone who reads the book of Isaiah attentively will be impressed by the topicality and the power of his message for us. More than ever we need to stimulate each other to take time each day (Acts 17:11b) to listen to what the Spirit has to say to us personally through the Word of God.

Let what God has said also be a regular topic of conversation in the family (Deu 6:6-9). This commentary could be a useful tool for this. For example, after a meal a part of the Bible book of Isaiah can be read, then the explanation of that same part can be read and talk about it with each other for a while. If we do this with a prayer to the Lord that "the eyes of" our "heart may be enlightened" (Eph 1:18), the blessing will be experienced by the whole family (cf. Heb 6:7).



When a part of God's Word has become clear(er), thank the Lord for what He has shown. God's Word can also make it clear that we have to confess something as sin. By giving thanks and through confession, what we read becomes our spiritual property, with which we can also serve others.

When we enter this beautiful part of the treasury of God's Word in prayer, we will emerge gratefully, because we have met the Lord Jesus in this book. At his calling Isaiah has seen His glory (Isa 6:1-3; Jn 12:36-41). In this book the glory of the Lord Jesus is painted for us in many colors. The more we see of it, the more our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and worship.

Ger de Koning / Tony Jonathan

Middelburg / Arnhem, Netherlands, May 2014 / Translation January 2022

## **Introduction**

What does the name 'Isaiah' mean to us when we read that name? Unfortunately, often no more than a name. But if we know the meaning of this name, hearing this name or reading about it will make our hearts tremble with immense joy, for his name means 'the salvation of the LORD'. The name 'Isaiah' represents in one word the content of the whole book.

The book of Isaiah is in terms of content the largest and most comprehensive prophetic book of the Bible. The prophetic word is present in many aspects in this book. Isaiah speaks about the fulfillment of God's counsel regarding His earthly people. This counsel means that God will bring His purposed salvation over Israel and through Israel also over the Gentiles (Rom 15:9-12). This fulfillment will take place in the millennial realm of peace. In several parts of the book we will also see a pre-fulfillment of this in our time. God's glory becomes visible in all times in all His ways with people, both in grace and in judgment.

## **Central theme**

Isaiah is called 'the evangelist of the Old Testament'. The good message – that is what the word 'gospel' means –, which contains blessing and comfort (Isa 40:1), goes out to Israel as well as to the nations (Isa 49:6). This message is directly related to the great and central subject of the prophetic word: the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. His first coming as the suffering Ser-

vant of the LORD and also His second coming as King above all kings are highlighted in detail. Isaiah speaks about the birth of the Lord Jesus, about His food, His life, His death, His resurrection, His return and His kingdom of peace. We will find it all in this Bible book.

There is no Bible book in which we learn so much about the suffering, the glorification and the kingdom of the Lord Jesus as in this book of Isaiah. It is also not surprising that, next to the book of Psalms, the New Testament quotes more from Isaiah's prophecy than from any other book of the Old Testament. The New Testament contains about 85 quotes from Isaiah.

### **Prophecy**

It is good to say just one more word about prophecy in general. Prophecy has been compared with music that always sounds melodious to the hearing of faith (cf. 1Chr 25:1a,3). The meaning of prophecy is especially appreciated in times of trial and discipline and sorrow and decay of God's people. Prophets are sent by God to His people in times of decay. Prophets are the mouth of God, the spokesmen of God (cf. Exo 7:1). They call upon a people who have departed from Him to return to Him so that He may bless them again. If they do not listen, judgment must come. Warnings are followed by judgment. Judgment always applies to the wicked mass of the people.

But judgment does not have the last word. For the prophets have always had their eye upon a God-fearing remnant, "a few survivors" (Isa 1:9). Sometimes the prophets themselves are a type of that remnant, like Isaiah (Isa 8:18). The characteristic of a remnant is that, as an object of God's grace, it remains standing for God and His rights in the midst of decay.

Those who constitute the remnant also receive from the LORD a special announcement concerning the future, the end time (Isa 46:10). The end time is the coming of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of His kingdom. Many prophecies have not yet been completely fulfilled. That complete fulfillment will come when the Lord Jesus establishes the kingdom of peace and reigns as Messiah. However, some prophecies have already had a partial, provisional fulfillment.

The true value of prophecy is that it deals with a Person and not primarily with events. It is about Christ – see under 'Central theme'. Prophecy is also

not only the prediction of future events, but also the passing on of God's thoughts and the application thereof to heart and conscience (1Cor 14:3).

This 'method' applies to the writing prophets, i.e. the prophets from whom we have a writing in the Bible. Non-writing prophets, for example Elijah and Elisha, prophesy in view of the actual situation of God's people. They also prophesy about future things, but then they speak mainly about the immediate future, about things they often experience themselves. In their lives and history we do see the spiritual characteristics of the end time, the characteristics of decay.

When studying the books of the prophets we can notice three layers or manners of approaching.

In the first place prophecy has a direct, first meaning for the situation in the time in which the prophet performs.

In the second place we see in the books of the prophets a prophetic perspective. In the events of the days of the prophet we see a foreshadowing of events which will take place at the end of time.

Thirdly, every Bible book of the prophets, including Isaiah, is a typological book. 'Typological' means that events or persons are types or pictures from which we can learn spiritual lessons. Scripture itself says that the history of God's people is written for that purpose and urges us to read Scripture in the same way (1Cor 10:6,11; Rom 15:4; Gal 4:21-31). The spiritual condition of the people of God in the past speaks to us about the spiritual condition of us as God's people now.

It is important to note that prophecy has a literal fulfillment for Israel, God's earthly people, and not for the church, God's heavenly people. However, literal fulfillment for Israel should not prevent the church from drawing spiritual lessons from the prophecies.

### **Person of Isaiah**

The name 'Isaiah' is the abbreviated form of the Hebrew *Yeshayahu* and means 'salvation of the LORD', a name that is in perfect agreement with the message of his book.

Isaiah is married. His wife's name is not mentioned, but what she does is. She is called "the prophetess" (Isa 8:3). They have two sons. The names of

these two sons are also mentioned. These names have a prophetic meaning. The youngest is called “Maher-shalal-hash-baz” (Isa 8:3), which means “swift is the booty, speedy is the prey”. The oldest is called “Shear-jashub” (Isa 7:3), which means “a remnant will return”.

Isaiah lives in a time full of dangers, when the survival of Israel and Judah is at stake. He is called by the LORD at the end of the reign of King Uzziah to be a prophet, which is the year 740 BC (Isa 6:1). He is then still relatively young. The period of his ministry spans more than 40 years. The area of his life and ministry is Jerusalem and its surroundings.

When he is called, he sees the LORD of hosts (Isa 6:1-3). This marks his life and ministry, just as Paul’s life and ministry were shaped by his encounter with the glorified Lord when he was on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9). The application for us is that the service we may do for the Lord must also be preceded by a personal encounter with Him.

According to tradition, Isaiah is cruelly killed by King Manasseh after he became king in 686 BC. Manasseh is then twelve years old. According to tradition, Manasseh put him in a hollow tree trunk and sawed him into pieces (cf. Heb 11:37). It is quite possible and not surprising that satan raged as a roaring lion against Isaiah, who is such a powerful witness of God, and had him sawn into pieces.

Satan did not only – according to tradition – have the *person* Isaiah cut into pieces. He has also tried, and is still trying, to cut his *book* into pieces by means of modern theologians. They claim that not one Isaiah, but three Isaiahs have written the book, over a period of hundreds of years. It shows that satan has understood the importance of the book of Isaiah well, because otherwise he would not have put in so much effort to attack Isaiah and his book so fiercely.

The discovery of the manuscripts of Isaiah in 1948 near the Dead Sea, the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls of Isaiah, which turned out to be a 1000 years older than the then known manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, confirm the extremely accurate and reliable transmission of the Bible text. These manuscripts of the 2nd century AD do not exhibit the characteristics of several authors. On the contrary, where liberal theologians believe that

there would be a transition from one writer to another, the text simply continues.

Isaiah is one of the greatest writers who ever lived. According to some experts his writing style and literary qualities are deeper and more brilliant than, for example, those of Shakespeare.

### **Political Background**

During the war in 734 BC between the coalition of Aram (or: Syria) and Israel, the ten tribes realm, on the one hand, and Judah on the other hand, King Ahaz of Judah was very afraid (Isa 7:2). Isaiah assures him that the enemies will not be able to overcome Judah. In order to benefit from this promise Ahaz must put his trust in the LORD and not in an alliance with Assyria. Ahaz, however, does not put his trust in the LORD, but in Assyria. That's why God judges Judah through Assyria. All of Judah, except Jerusalem, is destroyed. At the last moment God, in His grace, has delivered Jerusalem by destroying the entire army of Assyria in one night (Isa 37:36).

### **Some characteristic expressions**

Characteristic of the book of Isaiah is the expression *Kadosh Yisrael*, 'the Holy One of Israel', the three times holy God Who revealed Himself to Isaiah (Isa 6:1-3). This expression occurs twenty-five times in this book, twelve times in the first part (Isaiah 1-39\*) and thirteen times in the second part (Isaiah 40-66\*\*). This underlines the unity of this book. The same expression also occurs three times in the book of Psalms (Psa 71:22; 78:41; 89:18), twice in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 50:29; 51:5) and once in the second book of the Kings (2Kgs 19:22).

\* Isa 1:4; 5:19,24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11,12,15; 31:1; 37:23.

\*\* Isa 41:14,16,20; 43:3,14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9,14.

Another keyword in this book is the word *jasha* which means 'salvation'. This word also occurs twenty-five times in this book, eight times in the first part and seventeen times in the second part. The fact that this word occurs so often must have contributed to Isaiah being called the 'evangelist of the Old Testament'.

Another expression characteristic of Isaiah is *Ebed Yahweh*, which means 'servant of the LORD'. In plural it is an indication for the people of Israel.

In the singular, however, this expression is often not an indication for Israel, but for the promised Messiah. This is especially evident in the four songs about the Servant of the LORD we have in this book (Isa 42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:1-11; 52:13-15; 53:1-12).

### **Blessing to the nations**

When the LORD gives salvation by grace, He cannot limit this salvation to Israel. Salvation goes to the entire world.

“He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant  
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;  
I will also make You a light of the nations  
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth”” (Isa 49:6).

It should come as no surprise to us that the Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, has, from all the Old Testament books, chosen to take the book of Isaiah with him from Jerusalem. In this book he meets Jesus when he is reading it during the journey back to his country after his visit to Jerusalem (Acts 8:27-28,35). Isaiah has preached to him the gospel that he accepts after the explanation by Philip. He is the first of the nations of whom Scriptures tell us that he has become partaker of salvation.

### **Subdivision of the book**

The book of Isaiah can be divided in several ways. The large division is in two main parts, with a small middle part in between:

#### **1. Main part 1: Prophetic part (Isaiah 1-35).**

This part is about God’s judgment on Israel and the nations. In it Assyria is used by God as an instrument, as a rod of discipline in His hand. The youngest son of Isaiah is given a name with a meaning that indicates the contents of this part: “Maher-shalal-hash-baz” (Isa 8:3). This name means, as already mentioned, ‘swift is the booty, speedy is the prey’.

#### **2. Middle part: Historical part (Isaiah 36-39).**

Here we see the history of Hezekiah as a type and illustration of the history of the faithful remnant of Israel. This remnant is tried and tested and in

trouble both by its own sins and by enemies from outside. The LORD gives salvation through healing and deliverance.

### 3. Main part 2: Messianic part (Isaiah 40-66).

This part is also a prophetic part. It is about the salvation of the LORD that will come upon the people despite Israel's failure. God will eventually be able to bless the people through the coming of the Servant of the LORD, the Christ, the Messiah. These names mean the same. Both Christ (Greek) and Messiah (Hebrew) mean 'Anointed'.

The eldest son of Isaiah is given a name with a meaning that indicates the contents of this part: "Shear-jashub" (Isa 7:3). This name means, as already mentioned, "a remnant will return". To this remnant God will bestow all His promised blessings.

The book of Isaiah is a Bible in miniature. The first part, including the middle part, has as many chapters as the Old Testament has Bible books, namely 39. In this part the emphasis is on God's judgments on His people. These judgments must come because God is the Holy One of Israel and His people have become unholy. In the Old Testament God's holiness is more in the foreground.

The second part has as many chapters as the New Testament has Bible books, namely 27. This part emphasizes that salvation is the result of God's grace for Israel. In the New Testament God's grace is more in the foreground.

The characters of the first and the second main part are quite different. This is related to the enemies of God's people who play a leading role in each of these parts. In the first part Assyria is the enemy, in the second part it is Babylon. The middle part deals with the change from one enemy to the other. But He Who controls and governs everything is the God of Israel.

It is also possible to divide the book of Isaiah into seven parts:

1. Prophecies about Judah (Isaiah 1-12).
2. Prophecies about the nations (Isaiah 13-27).
3. A sixfold woe about the folly of unbelief (Isaiah 28-35).

Each of these three parts ends with a song of praise.

4. History of Hezekiah (Isaiah 36-39).

In the next three parts we find three times nine chapters about the salvation of God. Each of these three parts ends with the fate of the wicked.

5. God versus idolatry and Babylon (Isaiah 40-47).

6. Christ the Servant of the LORD, His glorification after His suffering because of His rejection by the people (Isaiah 48-57).

7. The faithful remnant of Israel, through the Spirit connected with the Servant of the LORD (Isaiah 58-66).

**Overview main part 1.1 – Isaiah 1-12**

**Sayings about Judah and Jerusalem**

The first part of the first main part (Isaiah 1-35) includes Isaiah 1-12 and can be divided as follows:

1. Indictment of the LORD against His people (Isaiah 1:1-31)
2. The house of God and the reign of God (Isaiah 2:1-5)
3. The day of the LORD (Isaiah 2:6-22)
4. God's judgment on Jerusalem and Judah (Isaiah 3:1-4:1)
5. Zion's glorious future (Isaiah 4:2-6)
6. The parable of the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7)
7. Condemnation of the sins of Judah (Isaiah 5:8-30)
8. The vision and calling of the Holy One (Isaiah 6:1-13)
9. The sign of Shear-jashub (Isaiah 7:1-9)
10. The sign of Immanuel (Isaiah 7:10-25)
11. The sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isaiah 8:1-10)
12. Isaiah and his children as signs and wonders (Isaiah 8:11-18)
13. The light and the Child (Isaiah 8:19-9:7)
14. The judgment on Ephraim (Isaiah 9:8-10:4)
15. The judgment on Assyria (Isaiah 10:5-19)
16. The deliverance of the remnant (Isaiah 10:20-34)



17. The Davidic King and His benevolent government (Isaiah 11:1-9)
18. The people and the nations (Isaiah 11:10-16)
19. A joyful song of praise (Isaiah 12:1-6)

# Isaiah 1

## **Introduction**

This chapter is the introduction to the whole book. It describes the trial of the LORD against Judah. The trial makes clear the necessity for the writing of the book and the necessity of God's intervention because of the spiritual condition of His people. This intervention is different, higher, than we would expect. Also the call to repentance sounds.

The trial shows us the condition of the people from God's perspective. In this trial we see that God is their righteous Judge Who must necessarily judge them. The reason for this is that they have broken the covenant with Him – which is made with heaven and earth as witness (verse 2). The trial also shows us that God still wants to be their great Redeemer and Savior. This book shows us the necessity of judgment and also how the LORD preserves His people in the midst of judgment.

The book also shows us what prophecy is. Prophecy is speaking in the Name of God whereby the conscience of the people and of the individual is placed in God's light. This is why prophecy on the one hand is sad, because it exposes the heart of God's sinful and ungrateful people. On the other hand, prophecy is sweet and glorious, because it also reveals the heart of God that goes out in love to His people. It shows that He seeks their well-being and that He finally blesses them – after sin has been discovered, confessed and forgiven on the basis of the work of His Son. Blessings are presented as a consequence of repentance, but fundamentally they come after the punishment on sin has been borne by the Mediator.

As mentioned in the introduction to the book, prophets are sent especially when God's people are in decay. They call for repentance, while at the same time they announce the judgment when the people persist in sin. For those who listen to the voice of God, prophets have an encouraging message. They remind them of the assurance of the blessing that awaits them. That prospect gives the faithful remnant strength to persevere in holiness in the midst of the apostate mass.

**Isa 1:1 | Heading**

*1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

The name “Isaiah” with the meaning “the salvation of the LORD” beautifully indicates the hallmark of his prophecy. His book is a “vision”, which means that he writes as a true “seer” about what he has seen. He has received his message from the LORD. He is a prophet of God, that is, a spokesman of God. He does not proclaim his own thoughts, but passes on what he has heard and seen from God.

Isaiah is called to be a prophet when “Uzziah” is still king of Judah, which was around 740 BC. Uzziah will not be king for long, because the year of the calling of Isaiah is the year of his death (Isa 6:1). Then he prophesies during the reign of the kings “Jotham, Ahaz [and] Hezekiah”. This means that the area of his ministry is the two tribes kingdom or the southern kingdom. He probably survived Hezekiah because he describes the history of Hezekiah (2Chr 32:32).

Three of the four kings mentioned are considered good kings. Only Ahaz is an awfully bad king. Yet also among the good kings the condition of the people is bad. This will become clear in this first chapter.

It can be daunting to realize how things really stand with God’s people in our days. Outwardly it may seem good, but the Lord knows the heart (cf. verses 10-16). That is why we need prophetic service, because that is how He can bring to light the real state of the heart. The first chapters of this book hold up a mirror to us. If we look attentively and observantly into the mirror, it will lead us to examine ourselves in the light of God’s Word (cf. Jam 1:22-24).

**Isa 1:2-7 | The Guilt of the People Established**

*2 Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth;  
For the LORD speaks,  
“Sons I have reared and brought up,  
But they have revolted against Me.  
3 “An ox knows its owner,*

*And a donkey its master's manger,  
[But] Israel does not know,  
My people do not understand."*  
4 *Alas, sinful nation,  
People weighed down with iniquity,  
Offspring of evildoers,  
Sons who act corruptly!  
They have abandoned the LORD,  
They have despised the Holy One of Israel,  
They have turned away from Him.*  
5 *Where will you be stricken again,  
[As] you continue in [your] rebellion?  
The whole head is sick  
And the whole heart is faint.*  
6 *From the sole of the foot even to the head  
There is nothing sound in it,  
[Only] bruises, welts and raw wounds,  
Not pressed out or bandaged,  
Nor softened with oil.*  
7 *Your land is desolate,  
Your cities are burned with fire,  
Your fields—strangers are devouring them in your presence;  
It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers.*

Before Judah hears the indictment in the trial with the LORD, witnesses first are called (verse 2), namely "heavens" and "earth". Isaiah calls upon the creative works of God to testify in the case of the covenant with the LORD that they have broken. Moses did the same in making the covenant (Deu 32:1).

Isaiah's message is not only for Israel, but also for the nations (Isa 49:6), yes, for all creation. After all, the Lord Jesus will also bring about a new creation. This happens in a way that is completely public and can be judged by everyone. Everyone will acknowledge the righteous way in which the LORD has done everything. Neither friend nor foe, not even the devil, will be able to show up one unlawfulness.

Isaiah introduces the LORD while He is speaking. Immediately the LORD presents Himself as Father of His people – not of the individual Israelite! – and says that He “reared” sons. We see that in history during the reigns of David and Solomon, where the people became great, a people of stature. He also “brought up” the people. This means that the people have come to adulthood and have gained a position above all nations.

Despite all the care with which He has treated them as His sons (Deu 14:1a) and with which He has surrounded them, He must tell them that they have “revolted” against Him. They have become rebellious children. This word ‘revolt’ is an important concept throughout the whole book.

The fact that the word “they” has emphasis underlines the seriousness of their rebellion. Precisely from those who have been reared and brought up by the LORD in such an excellent manner and have come to maturity, such behavior is not to be expected. The reproach is entirely justified.

In this Israel holds up a mirror to us. What about us who have the personal right to be children of God if at least we have believed in the Name of the Lord Jesus (Jn 1:12; 1Jn 3:1)? Do we know our Father in our practical life of faith and are we therefore dedicated to Him? What God has done for Israel as a people, He has done for us, who belong to the church of the living God, personally and spiritually. The story of Israel’s ingratitude and rebellion is “written for our instruction” (1Cor 10:11).

After having called upon the inanimate nature – heavens and earth – a few unreasoning animals are set as examples to Israel, the whole people, the twelve tribes (verse 3; cf. Jer 8:7). “An ox” and “a donkey” know their “owner” and “its master’s manger” respectively; they know that they must be with him for their food. He takes care of them. Has not God looked after His people in the same way?

But the people are dumber than these unreasoning animals (cf. Ps 73:22). As a people they are His sons – God still speaks of “*My people*” – but they do not know their Father anymore. “Does not know” has the meaning of “having no relationship with Him”. As a result they also lack the most elementary “understanding” of what the LORD asks of them and of the situation in which they find themselves. With them there is no consideration before God in view of their functioning as His people.

This description shows, in addition to the rebellion mentioned in verse 2, complete insensitivity and indifference to what is due to God. The people who are His possession and whom He has thus cared for completely ignore His love for them.

As Creator, the Lord Jesus has a right to every human being. Through His work on the cross, He has bought all people – believing and unbelieving (2Pet 2:1). Through that same work He, as Savior, has redeemed all who believe (1Pet 1:18-19). Of them He is the Owner. However, many of God's people today don't desire the food that He has prepared for them in His "manger" which is His Word.

The twofold relationship of the people to the LORD as Owner and Master is an example for us:

1. We are the possession of the Lord Jesus, He bought us, we belong to Him and depend on Him for everything we need;
2. He is our Master, we must obey Him.

In verse 4 God in a sevenfold enumeration of their depravity, pronounces the "woe" over them. This enumeration can be divided into two parts.

In part 1 it is about their condition as a nation (1 and 2) and as a family (3 and 4):

1. nation: "sinful nation", a nation who lacks the purpose of God for them. In Hebrew sin means: missing the goal, namely the glory of God (Rom 3:23).
2. people: "people weighed down with iniquity", a perverse, twisted people.
3. offspring: "offspring of evildoers", they do only evil and nothing good.
4. sons: "sons who act corruptly", they spread corruption around them.

In part 2 their condition is expressed: in their hearts (5), in their words (6) and in their actions (7). They have

5. abandoned Him in their hearts,
6. despised Him with their mouths, and
7. in the way they are going they have alienated themselves from Him by turning away from Him and no longer following Him.

Each part of the indictment enumerated contrasts sharply with what God purposed for His people and was entitled to expect from them (Exo 19:6a; Deu 14:1-2; 1Pet 2:9). Impressively, He is called here “the Holy One of Israel”, a title that is characteristic of Isaiah and for which he has a predilection (see Introduction under “Some Characteristic Expressions”). It means that the LORD is not only the greatest God, no, He is the First and the Last, yes, He is the only God. It also means that His Name is hallowed (Mt 6:9b) through the restoration of Israel (Eze 36:22-23).

Spiritually speaking, the members of God’s people are, as Moses says, “a perverse generation, sons in whom is no faithfulness” (Deu 32:20b). To them applies what the Lord Jesus later says to the Jews during His days on earth: “You are of [your] father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father” (Jn 8:44a). We also hear it in what He says to the Pharisees and Sadducees when He calls them “brood of vipers” (Mt 3:7). They have turned away from Him and left Him to serve the idols.

Because of their deviation, the LORD has had to discipline them. He wants to bring them back to Himself. He now asks them: “Where will you be stricken again?” (verse 5a). He says as it were: ‘Has it not been enough yet? Does it still make sense to strike you still more?’ (Jer 2:30a; 5:3).

The LORD has stricken them everywhere, in all places, by means of plagues and hostile nations. He has beaten them so many times, that there is no place left where He still could strike them. In ever changing ways God has made them feel His discipline, but everything has been in vain. New discipline doesn’t seem to make sense because they continue in their rebellion. They have become totally insensitive and indifferent to any kind of discipline. And this in spite of the severity of all discipline. The prophet points this out in verses 5b-7.

“The whole head”, “the whole heart” (verse 5b), yes, the whole body “from the sole of the foot even to the head” (verse 6a), so externally and internally, has become rebellious against God and has felt His discipline. Head and heart control the body. With the “head” possibly the king is meant (2Chr 28:22) and with the “heart” the whole social life. They are sick in the head and weary in the heart. When head and heart are sick, the whole body is sick. “There is nothing sound” in the whole body. They can

no longer think well with their head, they can no longer grasp courage in their heart, they have no physical strength left. Yet they do not resort to Him. If they feel anything at all, they resort to the idols (2Chr 28:22-23).

Their national existence consists of open, painful, festering “bruises, welts and raw wounds” (verse 6b). But they do not ask for a treatment of it. They are “not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil”. They are so messed up that their condition does not bother them at all and that they feel no need for healing.

Not only their lives prove their unfaithfulness, but also the condition of the land, which “is desolate” (verse 7). Isaiah speaks of “your land”. The LORD has given them that land to live there and to enjoy its fruit. That the land is desolate is said at the beginning and at the end of verse 7. It is directly related to the curse that Moses foresaw in the case of unfaithfulness of the people (Lev 26:33b; Deu 28:49-52). The prophet Isaiah uses the words of Moses and applies them to his time. The devastations are the result of the attack of the Assyrians (Isa 36:1).

The prophet also speaks of “your cities” and “your fields”. It is all given to them to live in them and to live from them. However, nothing is left of the cities. They are burned with fire, there is no place left to live. What the fields yield is devoured before their eyes by “strangers”, the enemy who is in the land. Those strangers have “overthrown” their fields. Their unfaithfulness has turned everything upside down. There is no place for the LORD anymore and therefore His people and the proceeds of the land are given up to the heathen. The land is the land of the LORD (Lev 25:23), but the vine-growers have taken possession of the inheritance unlawfully (Mt 21:38).

### Isa 1:8-9 | A Remnant

*8 The daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard,  
Like a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.  
9 Unless the LORD of hosts  
Had left us a few survivors,  
We would be like Sodom,  
We would be like Gomorrah.*



In the midst of all the unfaithfulness and God's judgment on it, the LORD testifies of His love for Zion by speaking of the city as a "daughter" (verse 8). Here, Zion is the daughter, a young woman who is actually the bride of God. Zion is the poetic name for Jerusalem. It is better not to translate the Hebrew *Bath-Tsion* with 'the daughter of Zion', but with 'the daughter Zion'.

God prevents the Assyrians from taking Jerusalem. In the middle of the devastated land only Jerusalem still stands. But there is not much left of the former glory of the city. It resembles "a shelter in a vineyard" and a "hut in a cucumber field". The shelter is for the watchman of the vineyard and the hut for the watchman of the cucumber field. The watchmen are the only human beings in a widely deserted environment. Zion is also compared to "a besieged city". A city under siege is starving. All strength and beauty disappear.

The few inhabitants of the shelter and hut mentioned in verse 8 are indicated by the expression "a few survivors" (verse 9). That there is a remnant is only due to God's grace. He, "the LORD of hosts", has ensured that they have been "left". If He had not intervened and kept a remnant, they "would be like Sodom" and "like Gomorrah" and would be literally perished like these cities. By leaving a remnant, God does not reject His people completely and not forever. In fact, the remnant in this book receives the place of the entire people.

Prophetically this will eventually be fulfilled when the future Assyria, also referred to as the king of the North, will destroy Israel. Even then, God will keep a remnant, "a third" (Zec 13:8c), for Himself.

Paul quotes verse 9 in his letter to the Romans to point out that the salvation of the saved is due only to God (Rom 9:29). This also applies spiritually to us as the church of Christ. Because of our unfaithfulness, the Lord could not maintain us as His witness on earth. The fact that we are still there, even though we are few in number, can only be owed to His grace (cf. Lam 3:22-24). The acknowledgment of this should lead us to great dedication.

The remnant acknowledges that grace, because they acknowledge that they have deserved a sudden and total destruction. The inescapable judg-

ment that will strike the mass will, after its execution, recall what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah (Deu 29:22-23). We will see this in the end time. Then the wicked mass will perish by the fire of judgment, while the remnant will be set free and blessed as servants of the LORD under His righteous Servant.

It is important to keep in mind that by Zion is meant the earthly Jerusalem and not the church. Nowhere in the prophecies of the Old Testament mention is made of the church. Indeed, the church is a mystery in the time of the Old Testament (Eph 3:4-5). The prophecies are about God's kingdom on earth. God wanted to give that shape in Israel. Because of their unfaithfulness they did not answer God's thoughts and are rejected for a time. However, God's plan will become reality in the realm of peace under the reign of the Lord Jesus.

For the church, which belongs in heaven, the kingdom of God at this moment is not external, but spiritual (Rom 14:17). All those who profess to be Christians can draw many spiritual lessons from the prophecies for their practical life of faith (1Cor 10:6,11). We see this when we see the resemblance between Israel as a failing testimony of God on earth then and professing Christianity as a failing testimony of God on earth now (Rom 11:16-24).

### **Isa 1:10-15 | Hypocritical Sacrifices**

*10 Hear the word of the LORD,  
You rulers of Sodom;  
Give ear to the instruction of our God,  
You people of Gomorrah.  
11 "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?"  
Says the LORD.  
"I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams  
And the fat of fed cattle;  
And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.  
12 "When you come to appear before Me,  
Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?  
13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer,  
Incense is an abomination to Me.*

*New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—  
 I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.  
 14 "I hate your new moon [festivals] and your appointed feasts,  
 They have become a burden to Me;  
 I am weary of bearing [them].  
 15 "So when you spread out your hands [in prayer],  
 I will hide My eyes from you;  
 Yes, even though you multiply prayers,  
 I will not listen.  
 Your hands are covered with blood.*

Isaiah represents the voice of the remnant when he acknowledges in verse 9 that it is thanks to God's grace that they did not become like Sodom and Gomorrah. This does not apply to the wicked mass to whom he addresses the word in verses 10-20. Spiritually speaking, the condition of Jerusalem and Judah resembles that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Eze 16:49). Jerusalem and Judah exhibit characteristics such as pride, exuberance and worry-free rest. In the future, this will be spiritually the case with the Jews in their temple who they have rebuilt in unbelief in Jerusalem (Rev 11:8).

Isaiah addresses the leaders of Jerusalem in the first place (verse 10). He speaks to them unflatteringly as "rulers of Sodom". He also addresses God's people, whom he calls just as unflatteringly "you people of Gomorrah". This means that their spiritual state will irrevocably lead to God's judgment. Therefore, he calls upon the leaders to "hear the word of the LORD" and exhorts the people to "give ear to the instruction of our God".

On top of that, and this is really shocking, they cover their depravity with a garment of religiosity. It is the religion of Cain. They multiply "sacrifices" to God (verse 11), but He rejects them. They are worthless to Him because they are brought with a hypocritical and cold heart (Isa 29:13; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Mic 6:6-8).

They may bring many sacrifices, but He abhors them. He has had enough of their "burnt offerings of rams". The ram is the animal of the sacrifice of consecration. By bringing a ram, they pretend that they want to consecrate their lives to Him. The "fat" and "blood" of all kinds of animals don't please Him. They pretend to acknowledge His right to it, but in practice

they do what they like. What a variety of sacrifices they bring and they do it exactly as it is prescribed. But He cannot be happy about it.

They come to appear before Him with straight faces and trample His courts (verse 12). Look how religious they are! But who asked that of them? He certainly did not. It is better for them to stay at home than to come hypocritically, because if they do, the offerings they bring are “worthless” (verse 13). They do not benefit at all, they have no effect at all. The “incense” they bring is “an abomination” to Him. The LORD rejects with disgust their whole service. Everything with which they think they are honoring Him with is nothing but spiritual selfishness. It serves only to satisfy their religious feelings. There is nothing for the LORD.

The feast days and the associated meetings are also an abomination to Him. “I cannot endure” them, He must say, for He is the God of justice, and what they do is “iniquity”. Even if they hold a “solemn assembly” – these are the holy assemblies during the seven annual feast days described in Leviticus 23 – it is a reprehensible occupation to Him. They are feast days for self-indulgence, while there is no place for the LORD.

They are therefore no longer “the LORD’s appointed times” (Lev 23:2), but their own feasts. He therefore also calls them “*your* new moon [festivals], *your* appointed feasts” (verse 14; cf. Jn 5:1; 6:4; 7:2). He hates them with all His soul. They are a burden to Him and He is weary of bearing them (cf. Isa 7:13). We would say: He is sick of it.

The language is extremely powerful and penetrating. God expresses in an almost emotional way His condemnation of their reprehensible service. He wants to convince His people of the abhorrence He has for their coming to appear before Him. Without knowing it, many are blind to what is appropriate for the LORD (cf. Rev 3:17-18) and have defended themselves against these accusations. They are so satisfied with themselves and their service.

He who approaches God hypocritically in prayer He does not see or hear (verse 15). He listens only if the practice – of which the hands speak – is pure (cf. 1Tim 2:8; Psa 24:4-5; 66:18). They stand in the temple praying with hands spread out, but God does not listen to them, for their hands are covered with blood. They commit injustice in secret and so they come

before Him. Nice praying in public, while the practice is in conflict with that, He abhors it.

He says of their drawing near to Him that they draw near to Him with their mouths and honor Him with their lips, but that they remove their hearts far from Him (Isa 29:13). God abhors a purely outward religion, then, now and in the future. The Christian's conscience can also be so seared that he can have the appearance of a Christian practice (2Tim 3:5) while living in his sins.

### **Isa 1:16-20 | Call For Repentance**

*16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;  
Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.  
Cease to do evil,  
17 Learn to do good;  
Seek justice,  
Reprove the ruthless,  
Defend the orphan,  
Plead for the widow.  
18 "Come now, and let us reason together,"  
Says the LORD,  
"Though your sins are as scarlet,  
They will be as white as snow;  
Though they are red like crimson,  
They will be like wool.  
19 "If you consent and obey,  
You will eat the best of the land;  
20 "But if you refuse and rebel,  
You will be devoured by the sword."  
Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

God calls the people to wash themselves and make themselves clean (verse 16; cf. Psa 51:7). In this call we hear the call of John the baptist to the religious leaders who come to his baptism: "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Mt 3:8). All the sacrifices they bring hypocritically do not cleanse their sinful deeds before God.

The call to wash means they are dirty. Washing is done with water. Spiritually, this means that by reading or hearing God's Word, which is compared to water (Jn 15:3; Eph 5:26), a person sees that he is a sinner and acknowledges that. Confession of sins is answered by God with cleansing of sins. That cleansing happens on the basis of the blood of Christ (1Jn 1:7b,9).

When they have washed and cleansed themselves, they also will respond to the call to remove the "evil" of their deeds (verse 16a) from before God's eyes. Then there is the mind to "cease to do evil" (verse 16b), by which the way is free "to do good" (verse 17; Jam 4:8b; Rom 12:9). A person cannot learn to do good unless he stops doing evil first.

Someone who does good will seek justice, which is reflected in caring for the weak and vulnerable in society. Seeking justice means, says Isaiah, reproving the ruthless, defending "the orphan" and pleading for "the widow". It is precisely these weak and vulnerable who are exploited by them (verse 23). By a total reversal of their behavior toward them, they would show themselves to be His people.

In order to achieve this the LORD calls them to enter into a trial with Him (verse 18). Then He will show them the righteousness of His actions. Also, when they acknowledge His righteous acts, He will cleanse them of their sins and grant them His forgiveness. He can do this on the basis of the work that His Son, the perfect Servant of the LORD, will accomplish as the guilt offering on the cross (Isa 53:7-12; Rom 3:25). God offers full forgiveness and purification in an unparalleled way on the basis of righteousness, no matter how serious and often someone may have sinned.

God points them to their sins that are "as scarlet" and "like crimson". Scarlet and crimson are both a blood red color. It is the color that indicates blood guilt on them. Their hands are red with the blood they have shed and for which there is no means by which they can wash it away (Jer 2:22). However, if they confess their sins and plead for God's grace, they will become white through the forgiveness they receive from God after their confession. The whiteness is compared to snow and wool. It points to the uncontaminated cleanliness of newly fallen snow and the benevolent warmth of wool that protects against the cold of sin and the world.

Prophetically, what we read here is a call to the people to acknowledge and confess their two sins. Those two sins are, first, the rejection of Christ and, second, the idolatry that leads to the acceptance of the antichrist. This prophetic aspect is discussed especially in the second part of Isaiah.

The LORD tells them that they can react in two ways. He also tells them the consequences of both reactions. The first reaction may be that they consent and obey Him (verse 19). As a result, there will be blessing, that is, they will “eat the best of the land”. The second reaction may be that they refuse and rebel. In this case, they will be devoured by the sword (verse 20). They can be sure that either the blessing or the curse will come because “the mouth of the LORD has spoken”. His statements are never empty statements, but full of effective power. What He says happens.

In verses 19-20 we hear a play on words. If they consent and obey, they will eat the best of the land; but if they refuse and rebel, they will be eaten by the sword. In one case they will be allowed to take food that God gives them; in the other case they themselves will serve as food for the sword of their enemies.

Prophetically there are two groups of people here that we find in the end time. We recognize the one group, those who ‘eat’, in the obedient faithful remnant. The other group, those who ‘are eaten’, we recognize in the large, disobedient mass of Israel. When Christ came, the people as a whole did not accept Him (Jn 1:11), while the remnant did accept Him (Jn 1:12).

When the antichrist comes, the people will accept him (Jn 5:43), while the remnant will reject him. Because of this, the remnant will eventually receive blessing and eat, while the refusing people will be eaten by the sword. The sword that comes out of the mouth of the LORD (cf. Rev 19:15) is Assyria, which is also called the rod of God’s anger (Isa 10:5).

To us listening to the Lord leads to *spiritual* blessing. To us, “eating the good of the land” (verse 19) means nourishing ourselves with “every spiritual blessing” (Eph 1:3) that is our part through the work of the Lord Jesus. If we disobey, our spiritual life will wither and our testimony will disappear.

## Isa 1:21-23 | The Cause of Judgment

*21 How the faithful city has become a harlot,  
She [who] was full of justice!  
Righteousness once lodged in her,  
But now murderers.  
22 Your silver has become dross,  
Your drink diluted with water.  
23 Your rulers are rebels  
And companions of thieves;  
Everyone loves a bribe  
And chases after rewards.  
They do not defend the orphan,  
Nor does the widow's plea come before them.*

These verses are a lament of Isaiah about the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem. The exclamation “how” (verse 21) is an expression of grief about the situation that has arisen. The prophet has presented to the people God’s rights and invited them to go into trial with God. He has also shown them God’s willingness to forgive. But “how” the once “faithful city has become”, through her love for the idols, a woman who is “a harlot” (Deu 31:16). Prophetically, this indicates that the earthly Jerusalem is spiritually a harlot by receiving the antichrist.

She has become so bad and depraved that there is no hope of restoration. She who has been “full of justice”, in whom “righteousness lodged”, has become a city of “murderers”. Day and night, the city has been a benefactor for its inhabitants because of the justice that has ruled it. It has been a safe place to live. But justice has lapsed to violence. The judges have become unjust judges, people who distort the law.

As a result, they are murderers themselves and they also let murderers go unpunished, so that they have a place to live in the city. As a result, the city has lost everything that made it pleasant and safe to live there. The most poignant case of unjust justice and murder is the condemnation of the Lord Jesus and the death penalty that was inflicted on Him in and through this city.



An ungodly mixture took place (verse 22). What should be of value as silver, by which the leaders of God's people are meant, has become worthless dross. The leaders have become depraved, worthless people through their complacency and self-indulgence. The leaders, who should be like wine a joy of the inhabitants, have become a drink that cannot be drunk and is spit out.

As an application, we can say that what is valuable to God, silver, and gives Him joy, wine, in a righteous judgment, has disappeared. Dross, which is worthless, and water, which dilutes the wine, for example human tradition, remove or obscure God's right.

The leaders have become tyrants. They have rebelled against the LORD and have rejected Him (verse 23). They prefer the company of thieves to the company of the LORD. They commit their theft by robbing the socially disadvantaged. They act according to the principle 'quid pro quo'. They twist the law, but in return expect a quid pro quo from those for whose benefit they twist the law. For bribes from the rich, they twist the law and squeeze the poor and defenseless orphan and widow even more.

### Isa 1:24-25 | Judgment Serves to Cleanse

*24 Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts,  
The Mighty One of Israel, declares,  
"Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries  
And avenge Myself on My foes.*

*25 "I will also turn My hand against you,  
And will smelt away your dross as with lye  
And will remove all your alloy.*

Isaiah contrasts the wicked with "the Lord GOD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel" (verse 24). It is as if the LORD in His indignation about the injustice of the leaders and the people presents Himself in the whole might of His Being.

The distinction between the names translated as "Lord" and "GOD" or "LORD" is important and should be noted throughout the Old Testament. Also during the further study of the book of Isaiah it is necessary to pay attention to this distinction. Every time the name "Lord", in lowercase let-

ters, is used, it is the translation of the Hebrew word *Adonai*. With this Name God is referred to as the Commander, the Lord, the Sovereign Governor.

If it says “LORD”, with capital letters, it is the translation of the Hebrew word *Yahweh*. That is the name of God as the God of the covenant, the Name that indicates His relationship with creation and man and especially with His earthly people. The name “LORD” is mentioned for the first time in Genesis 2, first in connection with creation and then in connection with man (Gen 2:4-22). In connection with Israel He makes Himself known to them with this Name when He is going to deliver them from Egypt (Exo 6:1-8). This Name then indicates the special relationship He enters into with these people.

“The Mighty One of Israel”, a title Isaiah uses only here, cannot let the unfaithfulness of His people go unpunished. He is powerful to deal with those He calls “My adversaries” in a way that He will be relieved of them. Relief is needed with pain. He has great pain and sorrow because of their apostasy. His relieve is found in the judgment on their apostasy, by which that apostasy is removed from before Him.

He must execute revenge over His opponents and enemies. But pay attention. The opponents and the enemies here are not the Assyrians, as the people like to see that, but God speaks here about them, His people! By “My adversaries” and “My foes” He means them. They, the rebellious Jews, are adversaries and foes of His law and His government.

That He turns His hand against His people is meant to cleanse them from their iniquities, so that they will be a pure silver (verse 25). The wicked mass has become dross and alloy (cf. verse 22). That dross is worthless, and the alloy looks like precious metal, but it is fake. He will remove both elements by the judgment of fire. What remains is a God-fearing remnant that is pleasing to His heart (Zec 13:9a; Mal 3:2).

### **Isa 1:26-27 | Restoration for Jerusalem**

26 “Then I will restore your judges as at the first,  
And your counselors as at the beginning;  
After that you will be called the city of righteousness,

*A faithful city."*

*27 Zion will be redeemed with justice*

*And her repentant ones with righteousness.*

After the execution of judgment righteous "judges" shall be appointed by the LORD "as at the first", that is, as in the days of David and Solomon (verse 26). With the "counselors as at the beginning" we can think of Moses and Joshua. This will result in a totally different situation than the one we have now with the unjust leaders who are in charge of the service and who control the lives of the people. As a result, Jerusalem can again be called "the city of righteousness, a faithful city" (cf. verse 21; Zec 8:3). We can also say that Jerusalem has once again become a faithful or trustworthy city – "faith" and "trust" are the same word in Hebrew.

The glorious characteristics of verse 26 will be the result of God's salvation of Zion based on His judgments that He executes in righteousness (verse 27). God's righteous grace leads to righteousness and steadfastness in the lives of those who are justified. The basis of salvation is the work of Christ Who received on the cross the righteous judgment of God on the sins of everyone who repent.

### **Isa 1:28-31 | Judgment on the Basis of Right**

*28 But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together,  
And those who forsake the LORD will come to an end.*

*29 Surely you will be ashamed of the oaks which you have desired,  
And you will be embarrassed at the gardens which you have chosen.*

*30 For you will be like an oak whose leaf fades away  
Or as a garden that has no water.*

*31 The strong man will become tinder,  
His work also a spark.*

*Thus they shall both burn together  
And there will be none to quench [them].*

Opposite those who repent and enter the realm of peace and enjoy its blessing (verses 26-27), are those who will follow the antichrist. They are "transgressors" of God's commandments (verse 28). By this is meant the apostate mass of God's people. "Sinners" refers to the lawless heathens,

people who do not fulfill God's goal – the word "sin" literally means "to miss the goal". Being "crushed" will affect them, for they have all "forsaken the LORD" and "will come to an end".

The mighty ones of the earth on whom they have trusted, represented in "the oaks", will disappoint them (verse 29), as will the glory of the world, represented in "the gardens". They have thought, through their connection with "the oaks" and the "gardens", to become an "oak" and a "garden" themselves, but will be greatly "embarrassed" in this (verse 30). They will come to an end together with them.

Verse 31 points to the final verdict at the end of the book (Isa 66:24), which underlines the idea that this first chapter is the introduction to the whole book. In "the strong man" we recognize the beast out of the sea, the ruler of the European Union, that is the restored Western Roman Empire (Rev 13:1-10). In "his work", i.e. the one who works it, we recognize the beast out of the earth, that is the antichrist (Rev 13:11-18).

"They shall both", i.e. the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth, "burn together". "These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone" (Rev 19:20). The fire of judgment does not come from outside, but from within. Just as "tinder" that contains fire spark and sets the tinder on fire from within, so sin carries the judgment within itself and calls the judgment on it. Their self-confidence is their downfall.

### **Summary Isaiah 1**

We have seen in this first chapter that it is the introduction to the whole book because it sets forth the principles of God's actions toward the people of Israel. It begins with the indictment of their sins and a call to repentance. This is followed by His promise to bless those who obey, the believing or faithful remnant, and His threat to judge those who are unwilling, the ungodly mass of the people.

After the judgment has been executed and cleansing has taken place, God's blessing in the realm of peace will come through His Messiah to Israel and through Israel to the nations. We will see that in the coming chapters.

## Isaiah 2

### Introduction

The four chapters that follow now, Isaiah 2-5, form a coherent whole. It is one speech to Judah and Jerusalem. A new section begins with Isaiah 6, which is indicated by a new time indication (Isa 6:1). Isaiah 2-5 contain a new vision that begins with the realm of peace.

However, this realm only comes into being after the day of the LORD (Verse 12) has come. The day of the LORD is the period when the LORD brings about His counsel concerning the glorification of Christ, the Branch of the LORD (Isa 4:2), the restoration of Israel and the judgment and blessing of the nations.

The first part of this chapter (verses 1-5) is largely verbatim similar to the description of the realm of peace by a contemporary of Isaiah, the prophet Micah (Mic 4:1-5). This does not mean that one of them copied it from the other or that one of the two would not have been inspired. The one Spirit of God simply inspired them both to write the same thing. It is therefore a twofold testimony underlining that what has been said will be fulfilled.

### Isa 2:1-5 | The Coming Realm of Peace

*1 The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

*2 Now it will come about that*

*In the last days*

*The mountain of the house of the LORD*

*Will be established as the chief of the mountains,*

*And will be raised above the hills;*

*And all the nations will stream to it.*

*3 And many peoples will come and say,*

*“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,*

*To the house of the God of Jacob;*

*That He may teach us concerning His ways*

*And that we may walk in His paths.”  
For the law will go forth from Zion  
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.  
4 And He will judge between the nations,  
And will render decisions for many peoples;  
And they will hammer their swords into plow-  
shares and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,  
And never again will they learn war.  
5 Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.*

In verse 1 Isaiah sees “the word ... concerning Judah and Jerusalem”. In Isaiah 1 he sees a *vision* concerning Judah and Jerusalem (Isa 1:1). Here he sees a *word* or *message* concerning Judah and Jerusalem (cf. Amos 1:1). This indicates that it is a supernatural message containing both visible and audible elements.

This verse is also an introduction to Isaiah 2-5 and also indicates that it is about the cleansing of Judah. This is indicated by “the word”, for this is presented in the Word of God as a picture of the water that cleanses (Eph 5:26). This cleansing takes place on “the day of the LORD” (Isa 2:12) through “the Branch of the LORD”, which is the Lord Jesus (Isa 4:2).

It also indicates that the Word is living and powerfully active. It will be seen and heard by someone who lives in fellowship with God. Isaiah sees as a “seer” with the eyes of God and sees “the Word” of God performing its work (1Thes 2:13). Therefore, what he transmits are the words of God and not the imagination or the representation of his own thoughts.

In verses 2-4 we have a wonderful description of the beginning of the millennial realm of peace. It is also the glorious end of a sad history. The word Isaiah sees relates to the end time, “the last days” (verse 2). This is a special expression that occurs fourteen times in the Old Testament, here the only time in Isaiah. This expression refers to the period when the Messiah will appear and God’s ways will be brought to completion (Heb 1:1-2; 1Pet 1:18-20). The expression here refers to the glory of the millennial realm of peace.

The temple, “the house of the LORD”, will be established on the Temple Mount and will be highly exalted, both literally and spiritually (cf. Isa 66:23; Zec 14:16). This is the temple described by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40-43). Mountains are often a picture of powerful kingdoms and hills of smaller earthly powers. The fact that the Temple Mount will be higher than all other mountains also means that Israel will be more powerful than the other nations and will be the head of all nations (Deu 26:19a).

“All the nations will stream” now to the mountain of the house of the LORD. This description evokes the picture of a peacefully flowing river. It is in contrast to the raging of the nations before that time, which is compared to the raging of a wild sea. Since the temple is located on Mount Moriah or Sion, here referred to as “the highest of the mountains”, the remarkable picture of a river flowing *upward* is created.

In the realm of peace, the nations will exhort one another “to go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob” (verse 3). That place is the center of the realm of peace. All nations will gather there. They will go there together, not to fight against it, but to receive teaching from the LORD. By building the tower of Babylon (Gen 11:1-9) man has wanted to make his own gathering point to honor himself. God prevents this and scatters the nations. Now the nations acknowledge His reign and find their center in His house.

The house of the LORD is here meaningfully called “the house of the God of Jacob”. It shows how God will then have openly triumphed over the selfish turnings that characterized Jacob and that have continued and has been proved in his offspring. This will be so clear that all nations will go to God’s house to learn from Him, so that they will walk in accordance with His law. When the judgments have been executed, people will be characterized by obedience to God and, as a result, by peace among themselves.

They also come because they long to receive teaching from Him “concerning His ways”, so that they will no longer go their own ways, but “walk in His paths”. Then the promise God makes in Genesis 22 is fulfilled (Gen 22:14; Isa 51:4; Mic 4:2; Zec 8:3). This fulfillment occurs because of the sacrifice that God Himself gives in His Son and of which the sacrifice of Isaac

by Abraham is a picture. The teaching concerns the law by which the kingdom of heaven will be ruled, as laid down in Matthew 5-7.

From Zion will not come forth the gospel of grace, but the teaching of the law. This underlines that it is not about the church, but about Israel. The law will be in the heart of Israel according to the new covenant (Heb 8:10).

Hunger for God's Word, the desire for spiritual food and instruction, is one of the proofs of conversion. Everyone who has come to faith in the Lord Jesus will want to know God's Word. The truth of God's Word is nowhere else on earth but in what is now His house, "the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1Tim 3:15).

Every heart that longs to walk in God's ways will therefore also go to the church meeting to hear about it. He will encourage others to do so with the words: "Come, let us go" (cf. Heb 10:25). Of course, this does not mean that there is no need for personal Bible study. Real hunger for the Word, stimulated by the teaching in the church, will encourage daily personal Bible study.

The LORD, that is the Lord Jesus, "will judge between the nations" (verse 4). The disputes between the nations do not disappear automatically, but are resolved by Him. The result is peace on earth. Everyone will be at peace with His decision. It is not an unsettled, fragile peace, but peace based on righteousness.

By eliminating any cause of conflict there will be no more wars. All war weapons, "swords" and "spears", can be converted into tools that work as blessings for man, "plowshares" and "pruning hooks" (cf. Joel 3:10). No one will be instructed how to wage war anymore. There is no longer any reason to do so. When walking in the paths of the LORD there is peace in the heart and peace with all fellow walkers who also walk in those paths.

The fact that they will no longer "learn war" is full of meaning. War is still taught and the teaching is done very efficient. The fear that characterizes people drives them to fight for their rights. As soon as someone thinks he is being wronged, weapons are seized, sometimes literally, sometimes in a battle of words. It is beyond the human capacity to abolish and banish war. There will come a time when people believe they have achieved this goal



and attribute it to their own efforts. They will say: “Peace and security”, and then be struck by “sudden destruction” (1Thes 5:3).

Any discontent between believers can also be removed if we want to be taught by the Lord Jesus (cf. Phil 2:5). If we go to Him with our disputes, He will judge. He can resolve any dispute. By bowing to His solution, peace will return and we will be able to use our strength for His work. That gives blessing. Lawsuits in the church today will be solved when thinking about the future described here (1Cor 6:1-8).

After this glorious perspective, Isaiah can, as it were, not hold back. He calls upon the “house of Jacob” to return to the LORD immediately and to “walk in the light of the LORD” (verse 5) and no longer in the false light of idols. It is a call to walk in the light of the teaching that God’s Word spreads. Walking in the full light of the LORD they will do in the realm of peace. That light gives a view of the future (verses 2-4).

Already today we may walk as children of light (Eph 5:8-20), looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus. We see elsewhere in the Bible that reading about the future and taking it into our hearts has a sanctifying and cleansing effect on our lives today (2Pet 3:10-14; 1Jn 3:2-3).

This section therefore shows us what God’s purpose and God’s standard are for the people of Israel. Since Israel does not meet this purpose and standard, God must necessarily judge the people and cleanse them through His word. This is described in the next section.

### **Isa 2:6-9 | The LORD Has Abandoned His People**

*6 For You have abandoned Your people, the house of Jacob,  
Because they are filled [with influences] from the east,  
And [they are] soothsayers like the Philistines,  
And they strike [bargains] with the children of foreigners.  
7 Their land has also been filled with silver and gold  
And there is no end to their treasures;  
Their land has also been filled with horses  
And there is no end to their chariots.  
8 Their land has also been filled with idols;  
They worship the work of their hands,*

*That which their fingers have made.  
9 So the [common] man has been humbled  
And the man [of importance] has been abased,  
But do not forgive them.*

Isaiah returns to the current situation. The contrast with the future, described in the previous verses and described again in Isaiah 4 (Isa 4:2-6), is enormous. The actuality compels him to call to walk in the light of the LORD (verse 5) and to pronounce judgments that must precede the establishment of the realm of peace. He also makes clear what the reason for these judgments is. In verses 6-11 we read the judgments on Israel and in verses 12-22 we read the judgments on all nations.

After the call to walk in the light of the LORD, Isaiah renews his complaint about the miserable apostasy of the people (verse 6). With his complaint he turns directly to the LORD. He expresses it to Him that He has abandoned His people, so that the light does not shine upon His people. The expression "the house of Jacob" indicates here, as the sequel shows, that the people go their own way and do not count with God.

Simultaneously with his complaint Isaiah justifies the actions of God. God had to abandon His people because they opened themselves to demonic influences "from the east" (cf. Num 23:7). They are even "filled" with it, so that there is no more room for the LORD. Also the Philistine influence, coming from the west, is great, because they are "soothsayers" just like the Philistines. The people open themselves to a form of fortune-telling that is done by looking at the shape of the clouds or changes in the sky and making decisions based on that. In doing so, they are radically opposed to what is strictly forbidden by the LORD in the law (Deu 18:10-12; Lev 19:26; 2Kgs 21:6).

In professing Christianity, the same influences from the east and the west have been allowed entrance. In the Bible, the east is the direction that indicates that someone leaves the LORD (Gen 4:16; 11:2). Influences from the east means influences from people who want have nothing to do with God and live in rebellion against Him. Have not they got much influence in professing Christianity?

In the west of Israel, that is in the land itself, live the Philistines. They are a picture of ritualism, a religion of rituals with superstitious practices linked to it. This has also gained wide acceptance in professing Christianity. It has mainly taken shape in roman-catholicism, but also in protestantism it is gaining more and more acceptance.

The LORD has not abandoned His people because He would not love them, but because they have become equal to the nations around them. Their practice shows it. They “strike [bargains] with the children of foreigners”. They join them – they go, so to speak, with them under the same yoke – and adopt their habits. In this way they nullify their separation (Hos 8:8-9). They exclude God and turn against Him in enmity (Jam 4:4; 2Cor 6:14).

The possession of “silver and gold”, those endless treasures (materialism), the “horses” with which the land is also “filled” and the endless row of “chariots” (military strength) they undoubtedly attribute to the idols worshiped by them and the demonic practices performed by them (verse 7). At the same time, they show their rejection of the commandment God has given on this matter (Deu 17:16-17). By the way, this commandment does not concern *being* rich, but *wanting* to be rich (1Tim 6:9) and the abuse of power that is made of wealth once one is rich.

Also the possession of horses is not forbidden, but the *multiplication* of horses is, because thereby there is great danger of relying on them and not on the LORD. The land is also “filled” with them. The greed of the people leads them to bow down to tangible things, the work of their own hands. Greed is closely related to idolatry. God’s Word even links them and speaks of “greed, which amounts to idolatry” (Col 3:5).

Here also greed is directly followed by the charge that “their land ... has also been filled with idols” (verse 8). Again we hear the word “filled”. While man attaches himself to his possessions and boasts of his achievements and worships them, this idolatry is in fact a humiliation for man (verse 9a). Idolatry lowers his dignity as a human being – who is after all the head of creation – down to below matter (cf. Rom 1:21-23). It does not matter if that person is a person of stature or someone from the working class. All ranks of the people are permeated by this idolatry.

The (disdainful) word for idols here is *elilim*. That resembles the word for God, *Elohim*, but *elilim* means ‘worthless, empty things, nullities’. The land of Israel is full of worthless things, nullities, things that are perishable and will disappear (verse 18). How is it with us? Do we have such things in our lives?

This situation brings Isaiah to the prayer: “Do not forgive them” (verse 9c). The text is literally: “You will not forgive them.” It can also be read as the reason why God must judge and reject them (verse 6; cf. Hos 1:6), because if God does not forgive, He must judge. The intercessor for the people here feels compelled to plead against his people. This prayer is the right expression of a heart that feels how much God is grieved by this attitude and action of His people. The only thing that fits is judgment because God cannot endure this evil of His people.

Materialism and enjoyment are as present among Christians today as they were among God’s people then. Consider how much attention and money is paid to material things and how little attention God and His Word receive. If we notice this, we should not ask for forgiveness for it, but pray that through God’s grace there will be sincere confession, self-judgment, and conversion.

Prophetically we find here the spiritual characteristics of Israel at the time of their idolatry under the government of the antichrist. The measure of their sins is then full. The judgment is inescapable.

### **Isa 2:10-18 | The LORD Against All Pride**

*10 Enter the rock and hide in the dust  
From the terror of the LORD and from the splendor of His majesty.  
11 The proud look of man will be abased  
And the loftiness of man will be humbled,  
And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.  
12 For the LORD of hosts will have a day [of reckoning]  
Against everyone who is proud and lofty  
And against everyone who is lifted up,  
That he may be abased.  
13 And [it will be] against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up,*

*Against all the oaks of Bashan,  
 14 Against all the lofty mountains,  
 Against all the hills that are lifted up,  
 15 Against every high tower,  
 Against every fortified wall,  
 16 Against all the ships of Tarshish  
 And against all the beautiful craft.  
 17 The pride of man will be humbled  
 And the loftiness of men will be abased;  
 And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,  
 18 But the idols will completely vanish.*

The judgment is inevitable, because they have forgotten their Rock, the LORD (Isa 17:10a), and replaced Him with idols. Because of the “terror of the LORD”, that is of His Person, and “the splendor of His majesty”, that is of His radiance (verse 10), they are now called to resort to the natural rocks.

‘The splendor of his majesty’ is a favorite expression of the Assyrians who use it for themselves. But the use of this expression belongs exclusively to the LORD. The Assyrians must hide “in the dust”, the substance from which they have been formed and where they belong, because they have robbed the honor of their Former and banned Him from their lives.

Here, as in so many other places in this book, we find the going together of the judgment through the Assyrian invasion, the disciplinary rod in the hand of God for His people, and the judgment in the last days, shortly before the thousand years of peace. In both cases the pride of man is humiliated and the LORD alone will be exalted (verse 11).

Here people *are forced* to humiliate themselves. John the baptist, however, humbles himself *voluntarily*. This is evident from his words: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30). Every knee will bow in the Name of Jesus (Phil 2:10), either now voluntarily out of love for Him, or in the future forced with acknowledgment of His majesty. The more we humble ourselves, the more room the Lord is given to make Himself visible in us, so that people will glorify Him in us.

From verse 12 we are moved to the second coming of the Lord Jesus, which is His coming as Messiah for His people and as Judge of the whole earth. When He comes to execute righteousness on earth, the valuations that man holds will be reversed. The things that people have considered valuable up to that point will then become unimportant to them, and what they have previously considered to be side issues will then become main issues.

He comes as “the LORD of hosts” (verse 12), a name Isaiah uses more than 60 times for God. It is a military name, indicating the military power and strength of God. When this almighty LORD comes with His armies, nothing can stand against Him. The opposition is shown in the following verses in symbols and in various other ways.

“The day of the LORD” indicates a period in which the Lord Jesus – He is the LORD – will exercise all authority given to Him by the Father (Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3a). It is the day when He openly turns against all self-glorification of man and against all idols. It is the day when everything will come to light and be judged by Him (Jn 5:22,27). Then He fulfills the word He has spoken on earth: “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled” (Lk 14:11a). The expression “the day of the LORD” is further explained in detail in Isaiah 13 (Isa 13:6-13).

When the Lord Jesus appears for the second time, He will first execute judgment on all man’s pride. In verses 13-16 Isaiah uses seven examples from nature and society to describe what the LORD will act against. The trees as “cedars” and “oaks” (verse 13) can be seen as symbols of the leaders, such as kings and princes, of the nations who will rise up against the Jews at the end of time.

“The lofty mountains” and “the hills that are lifted up” (verse 14) represent large and small earthly powers, nations that exalt themselves above other nations. They have built high towers and fortified walls (verse 15) to defend themselves against possible attacks. They also trade by sea to increase their economic power (verse 16). This wealth also includes “beautiful craft”, a unique expression in Hebrew derived from the word “image”, where we can think of the power of entertainment and the visual culture of our time.

When the LORD appears, man's self-exaltation will have to give way to the exaltation of the LORD. They will not be able to maintain their pride, but will be bowed down with irresistible power. In that day "the LORD alone will be exalted" (verse 17).

And what happens to the idols they have now put their hopes in and expect their salvation from (verse 18)? They "will completely vanish". With that everything is said about their fate. The idols are the root of the calamity that is coming over them. They have left the LORD and replaced Him with the idols (*elilim*, see explanation of verse 8). In just three words what happens to them is shown as in a flash. Literally it says: "Nullities to nothing." They are worthless and will disappear altogether.

If only the Lord Jesus has the say in our life, if we exalt Him alone, no form of idolatry will get a foothold with us (1Jn 5:21).

### Isa 2:19-21 | The Terror of the LORD

19 [Men] will go into caves of the rocks  
 And into holes of the ground  
 Before the terror of the LORD  
 And the splendor of His majesty,  
 When He arises to make the earth tremble.  
 20 In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats  
 Their idols of silver and their idols of gold,  
 Which they made for themselves to worship,  
 21 In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs  
 Before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty,  
 When He arises to make the earth tremble.

Then comes the moment that the LORD arises (verses 19-21). What a frightening reaction that gives! Panic breaks out. All those little creatures who want to be like God will not hide among the trees in paradise (Gen 3:7-8), but flee into caves and underground holes (verse 19). "Terror of the LORD", that is of His Person, seizes them. "The splendor of His majesty", that is His radiance, overwhelms them. For a long time it seemed that He did not interfere with the earth. He had no place anymore in man's think-

ing. When He arises in His full greatness, they understand to their dismay that they have made a mistake and a strangling fear seizes them.

In the light of the splendor of His majesty, all their trust in their idols shrinks and disappears. "In that day" they will realize their deception, their uselessness and their worthlessness (verse 20). "That day" is the day of the LORD (verse 12), the day in complete contrast to the day of man. Man's day is the present evil age in which God allows man to do his own will and to go his own way apart from Him.

With horror, "man", and especially religious man, will "cast away" the so-called good works of his hands on which he has spent his good gold and silver, to "the moles and the bats", those unclean animals. Those "idols" on whom they put their trust are now lying like old dirt between unclean moles and bats. Man discovers that having and carrying along all those world religions, such as islam, buddhism and hinduism, gives no advantage at all. On the contrary, dragging them along only causes run delays. Run is the watchword, and as quickly as possible. That is the end of their reliance on false religions.

They are chased in their run by "the terror of the LORD" and "the splendor of His majesty" (verse 21). Once they have found a crevice or rift in the rocks, they will enter it to shelter themselves from the burnt anger of the LORD (Rev 6:12-17; Hos 10:8).

But "when He arises to make the earth tremble", fleeing and hiding is a foolish, pointless, yes, laughable action. There is no escape, no more than there was for the first couple of men (Gen 3:8; Psa 139:7). Nothing will protect them from His anger. They cannot escape judgment. Man's day comes to an inglorious, shameful end.

This is the end of the highly acclaimed culture and technique of the people and their efforts to make this world a safe place of rest. This is the end because they have ignored Him Who created everything to His own glory. Instead of rejoicing in Him, man has rejoiced in himself. Everything that has been given to him, he did not use to the glory of God, but to the glorification of himself. He has become proud, arrogant, and presumptuous of everything God has given him. That is why judgment comes on him.



**Isa 2:22 | Stop Regarding Man**

*22 Stop regarding man, whose breath [of life] is in his nostrils;  
For why should he be esteemed?*

The prophet summons them to stop regarding man, to no longer trust him (Psa 118:8-9). After all, who is man, that puny creature, opposite to the Almighty (Psa 104:29)?

By “man” is meant here in particular “the man of sin”, that is the man who wants to be like God (2Thes 2:4b), the antichrist, the false messiah. After his extraordinary deception by exercising power and signs and false wonders, he will be nullified by the Lord Jesus at His coming (2Thes 2:3,8-9). His depravity is so obvious, that he will be thrown alive into hell without any form of trial (Rev 19:20).

In summary, we can say that the sin of idolatry – man who wants to be like God – is the consequence and the climax, expressed in the number six hundred and sixty-six (Rev 13:18), of man’s proudness and pride.

## Isaiah 3

### Introduction

This chapter continues the description of the abuses among the people, which started in the previous chapter. In the light of God it has become clear how insignificant man is (Isa 2:22), despite his pride and arrogance. But the people of God do not know this yet. In order to let them know, the LORD is now taking away all their resources. Through this judgment, which always “begins with the household of God” (1Pet 4:17), Zion is humiliated.

As general as the knocking down of human pride in the previous chapter is, as precise and profound will be the judgment on Zion. The judgment will be on the city and the people, while the focus of this will be on the leaders and the distinguished women.

The LORD shows how the judgments take place. The judgments are described here in a way that is only understood if we have an eye for them. Then we discover that He takes things away, both materially and spiritually, with a purpose. He wants to force His people, as it were, to ask for Him again. The LORD takes them into the remote and desolate wilderness without aids to speak to their hearts (Hos 2:14).

### Isa 3:1-7 | The LORD Removes Supply and Support

*1 For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is going to re-  
move from Jerusalem and Judah  
Both supply and support, the whole supply of bread  
And the whole supply of water;  
2 The mighty man and the warrior,  
The judge and the prophet,  
The diviner and the elder,  
3 The captain of fifty and the honorable man,  
The counselor and the expert artisan,  
And the skillful enchanter.*

4 *And I will make mere lads their princes,  
 And capricious children will rule over them,  
 5 And the people will be oppressed,  
 Each one by another, and each one by his neighbor;  
 The youth will storm against the elder  
 And the inferior against the honorable.*  
 6 *When a man lays hold of his brother in his father's house, [saying],  
 "You have a cloak, you shall be our ruler,  
 And these ruins will be under your charge,"  
 7 He will protest in that day, saying,  
 "I will not be [your] healer,  
 For in my house there is neither bread nor cloak;  
 You should not appoint me ruler of the people."*

The words "for behold" with which verse 1 begins connect directly to the above. They are the introduction to the judgments that will strike Jerusalem and Judah because of the abuses described in the previous chapter. These judgments are carried out by "the Lord, the LORD of hosts" (for the meaning of these names see the explanation at Isaiah 1:24). These names of God combine the exaltedness, absolute authority and omnipotence of God as sovereign Ruler and Judge and imply a strongly threatening judgment.

The removal of "supply and support" means that the LORD will deprive the people – that is, Jerusalem and Judah – who place their trust in man and not in the LORD, of any form of support, both naturally and spiritually. Anything they believe to be giving them support will be removed, so that nothing remains to rely on. The natural support for their bodies "of bread and ... of water" will disappear, so that their strength will perish. There will also be a lack of spiritual support, for fighting strength, competent guidance, counsel and craftsmanship will be removed (verses 2-3).

The LORD removes everything on which the people place any trust, whether it comes from a good or an evil (the "diviner") source. He can take away support through death. He can also do so because the enemy leaves nothing edible and captures the leaders and deports them to his own country. The people will become powerless because of lack of food and they will become adrift because of lack of guidance (2Kgs 24:14).

Extreme confusion is the result, a confusion that is increased by a reversal of values and standards. The LORD “will make mere lads their princes” (verse 4). He will make His people prey to the “capriciousness” of the immature, unsensible youth, who believe they have the wisdom (Ecc 10:16a; 1Kgs 12:8-11). The only twelve-year-old King Manasseh is an example of this (2Chr 33:1-11).

The incompetent leadership and arbitrariness of a child as a king create anarchy and confusion. Each member of the people will seek his own right (verse 5). Each will oppress the other in order to get what he thinks he is entitled to. The commandment to love one’s neighbor has completely turned into the opposite, selfishness. The result is the oppression of each other and the trampling of each other’s rights.

Those for whom respect is due because of their age and life experience, “the elder”, will be violently driven from their place by inexperienced “youth” (cf. 1Pet 5:5a; Lev 19:32). The “inferior”, the man who performs nothing and contributes nothing to the welfare of the community, but merely damages it, does not hesitate to attack “the honorable”, the man who seeks and commits himself to the good of the community. Age and position, to which a certain respect belongs, no longer make any impression.

The same leveling we see today in society and among God’s people. Children have a say and call the shots. They approach and treat the elderly with disrespect. As a result, society is disrupted. Faith sees in this the hand of God Who surrenders man to himself because man does not want Him.

Well, maybe the family bond still gives some hope (verse 6). People will seek support from a family member who has a semblance of prestige, which is seen in wearing a “cloak”. Someone who has a conspicuous appearance will be accosted by those who are desperately looking for a person who can bring some order to the “ruin”. They beg him to take charge over the mess.

However, the hope on a family member of stature for an outcome is in vain (verse 7). Also family members cannot or do not want to help each other. Nobody wants to take the responsibility to be the “healer” of the sick society. Everyone hides behind the lack of food and leadership abilities and makes that clear. He may be wearing a cloak, but he does not have one in

his home. His own interest forbids him from even attempting to deal with the chaos. He refuses to function as a leader. It indicates that society has collapsed and is completely distraught.

### Isa 3:8-9 | Reason for Judgment

*8 For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen,  
Because their speech and their actions are against the LORD,  
To rebel against His glorious presence.  
9 The expression of their faces bears witness against them,  
And they display their sin like Sodom;  
They do not [even] conceal [it].  
Woe to them!  
For they have brought evil on themselves.*

The prophet reminds his readers of the spiritual and moral causes of this anarchy in Jerusalem and Judah (verse 8). This situation is the result of their brutal and blatant rebellion against the LORD expressed in “their speech and their actions”. There is not only discontent, grumbling, but an outright rebellion. It is a general principle that whoever rises up in word and deed against the LORD stumbles and falls. Challenging and brutal they rebel against the glorious presence of the LORD (cf. Jude 1:9-10). It is this glory that made the nations flee in the previous section (Isa 2:19).

And yet they know His glory, for He has revealed Himself for many centuries as the holy and merciful God. Although they know His glory, they prefer sin. Instead of making His glory the subject of their conversation, they speak openly about their sins without any shame (verse 9; cf. Hos 5:5; 7:10; Rom 1:32). Freely rendered, verse 9a reads: ‘The expression of their faces speaks volumes.’ They have “a harlot’s forehead” and refuse “to be ashamed” (Jer 3:3), “they did not even know how to blush” (Jer 6:15).

They “never cease from sin” (2Pet 2:14). That is why Isaiah pronounces the “woe to them”. He who is characterized by such shamelessness “hurts himself”. Such a person brings the judgment on himself, he works his own demise.

We also see it today in the world around us and in professing Christianity. Homosexuality, the practice of Sodom, is no longer considered a sin, but

is seen as a normal expression of life. Even in what were once strongholds of orthodoxy, homosexual couples are told: 'We respect your faithfulness in the relationship. There is room for you in the church.' Once again they show their resemblance to Sodom and thus call judgment on themselves (Gen 18:20).

In fact, this is the measure of the sin of the world. Not only do they commit these sins, but they also give hearty approval to those who practice them (Rom 1:32). The latter is also evidenced by their rejection and oppression of people who to them are dissenters. See for this the practice of our, Western world, anti-discrimination laws.

### **Isa 3:10-11 | The Righteous and the Wicked**

*10 Say to the righteous that [it will go] well [with them],  
For they will eat the fruit of their actions.  
11 Woe to the wicked! [It will go] badly [with him],  
For what he deserves will be done to him.*

In the midst of all this wickedness, there is a word for “the righteous”, which is he who fears God and shows it in his life (verse 10; cf. Isa 1:19). No matter how difficult it may be for him in this situation, he may know that his life will produce fruit which he himself will be allowed to enjoy. For him, this is an encouraging knowledge in the face of the fate “of the wicked” (cf. Isa 1:20). It will go badly with the latter because he has lived badly (verse 11). The judgment as the wages of sin is deserved by himself. He has asked for it because of his sins and he will receive it.

These two ways and where they end, we find many times in the book of Proverbs. It is the law: “Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Gal 6:7b). This applies to every human being of every age, including us now.

### **Isa 3:12-15 | The Leaders Are Seducers**

*12 O My people! Their oppressors are children,  
And women rule over them.  
O My people! Those who guide you lead [you] astray  
And confuse the direction of your paths.  
13 The LORD arises to contend,*

*And stands to judge the people.*

*14 The LORD enters into judgment with the elders and princes of His people,  
"It is you who have devoured the vineyard;  
The plunder of the poor is in your houses.*

*15 "What do you mean by crushing My people  
And grinding the face of the poor?"  
Declares the Lord GOD of hosts.*

A further degeneration of the condition of the people can be seen in the section that starts here and continues to Isaiah 4:1.

The people get the leaders they deserve. There are two kinds of leaders: "children" and "women" (verse 12; cf. 1Kgs 15:13; 2Kgs 11:1,13). In verses 12-15 the leaders are described as *children*, who are *incapable* to rule (cf. 1Tim 3:2,6). In the section from Isaiah 3:16 to Isaiah 4:1 they are described as *women*, who are *unauthorized* to rule (cf. 1Tim 2:12).

In both cases they are leaders who do not have a place of authority, but who assume it. If they take that place, they turn out to be tyrants. It may also be that the man rules formally, but the woman is in control, as we see with Ahab and Jezebel (1Kgs 21:7).

Children are generally guided by their lusts and passions, without any sense of compassion. Children can be very tender, but also extremely hard. They are capable of mistreating and oppressing those in their power. Women are generally guided by their feelings. They too can be very tender, but also very cruel. In their desire to assert themselves, they go over corpses. In both cases the ability to deliver the people from the state of confusion lacks.

What kind of leaders are leading in professing Christianity? Many leaders are leading God's people away from Christ. They think they are qualified, but they are seducers. When women take (or get!) the lead, only deception can follow. They can only lead the people of God in the wrong direction. They lack a clear direction because they occupy a place not given to them by God.

By addressing them as "My people" the LORD wants to reach their hearts, so that they may see how they are and return to Him. He reminds them

that these leaders are deceiving them. Instead of leading the people on the right way, they lead them astray by taking them on a wrong way.

The LORD cannot endure the attitude of the leaders. He arises and prepares Himself for a lawsuit against them (verse 13). He is indignant about their attitude and actions and takes the attitude of Judge toward “the nations”, that is the tribes of Israel, the whole of Israel. [The Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament – translates “the peoples” with “His people”].

After the LORD has prepared Himself for the trial, He actually enters into judgment with the leaders, “the elders and princes of His people” (verse 14). He particularly blames them for behaving like wild beasts in the vineyard, which they should have guarded against wild beasts. They have devoured the vineyard, so that He does not get any fruit from it, that is to say, no joy, of which the wine speaks. His joy is an undisturbed fellowship with them. The leaders have made that impossible. They have plundered, trampled and abused God’s people and filled their own houses with the plunder.

The exclamation “what do you mean ...?” expresses the amazement of the LORD (verse 15; cf. Psa 94:5), as if He cannot understand that the leaders behave so ruthlessly toward their peers (cf. Mt 18:21-35). He Himself has dealt with them with so much mercy. Why then this way of acting? He exacerbates the accusation by talking about those they mistreat as “My people”. What is done to His people hits Him in the heart. At the same time He presents Himself, as in verse 1, as “the Lord GOD of hosts”. They have to do with Him.

### Isa 3:16-26 | Judgment on the Proud Women

16 Moreover, the LORD said, “Because the daughters of Zion are proud  
And walk with heads held high and seductive eyes,  
And go along with mincing steps  
And tinkle the bangles on their feet,  
17 Therefore the Lord will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs,  
And the LORD will make their foreheads bare.”  
18 In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of [their] anklets,  
headbands, crescent ornaments, 19 dangling earrings, bracelets,



veils, 20 headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets,  
 21 finger rings, nose rings, 22 festal robes, outer tunics, cloaks, money  
 purses, 23 hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans and veils.  
 24 Now it will come about that instead of sweet perfume  
 there will be putrefaction;  
 Instead of a belt, a rope;  
 Instead of well-set hair, a plucked-out scalp;  
 Instead of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth;  
 And branding instead of beauty.  
 25 Your men will fall by the sword  
 And your mighty ones in battle.  
 26 And her gates will lament and mourn,  
 And deserted she will sit on the ground.

To put their sins clearly before the eyes of His people, the LORD describes the show-offs of the women. That is why the LORD says “moreover” (verse 16). He continues His subject. The vanity of the leaders is illustrated and made visible in their wives, “the daughters of Zion”. Inner depravity always reveals itself. Thus, the pride of the heart becomes visible in one’s walk of life.

The cause of the depraved actions of His people can be seen in the desires of these “daughters of Zion” for the lifestyle of the world. Women have an enormous influence on the development of their children, whom they have with them throughout the day. That is why they are part of the cause of the dramatic deviation of the LORD. If these women had some sense of what suits God, the situation would not be completely hopeless.

However, these women are of a completely different kind. The arrogant pride of the leaders of Judah is equally present in these women, “the daughters of Zion”. They “are proud” and look down upon others with contempt. “They walk with heads held high” means that they stretch the neck backwards to look taller, which shows their proudness. “Seductive eyes” refers to their way of looking. Their innocent-seeming gaze is an decidedly sensual one, a gaze to arouse sexual desire. This is how they walk around, “with mincing steps”, tinkling with “the bangles on their feet” while walking.

They walk, look and decorate themselves in a way that gives them the certainty that everyone has to look at them. With the greatest complacency they want to draw all attention to themselves. God particularly blames them for that. He is not indifferent to how and why a woman dresses and decorates as she does. Also in the New Testament there are clear indications about this (1Pet 3:3-4; 1Tim 2:9-10). Christians women would do well to pay attention to this, if at least they are women making a claim to godliness.

It is also clear that women who behave like these daughters of Zion, women who are as concerned with themselves and their appearance as they are, are not good housekeepers (cf. 1Tim 5:14). If they only pay attention to themselves and do their best to attract the attention of those around them, they will spend little time raising their children. A society in which women assume positions that are not theirs and therein are even stimulated by the government, will become an ungovernable society with an abundance of problem youth.

The literal behavior of the daughters of Zion is a reflection of the spiritual state of the people as a whole. The LORD describes the behavior of the women in pictorial language and mocks their conceit (verse 17). A terrible retribution must take place. Their frivolity will turn into scabies reminiscent of leprosy (Lev 13:30-37; 14:54). The scab will cover their scalps by the judgment of the LORD.

Possibly we can think of Jerusalem on Mount Zion, where Zion is "the scalp" and Jerusalem is the glory that will be affected by the scabies. A scalp that is affected by the scab must be shaved. Thus, Jerusalem, the city of glory, will be destroyed and its inhabitants will be taken away. Instead of the admiration of the surroundings they are after, disgust will fill all those who perceive them.

Making bare "the secret parts" (Darby Translation) means that the city will be razed to the ground, exposing the foundations. The shame and defamation of it will be seen by everyone.

"In that day" (verse 18) of utter shame and defamation "the Lord", *Adonai*, the sovereign Commander and Master, will "take away the beauty" of all

their jewelry. Everything she flaunts will be taken away from her, so that she stands naked.

Next, Isaiah lists in the section of verses 18b-23 an abundance of toilet-tries, ornaments, and garments. Isaiah is very detailed here. He does this to show the enormous contrast between the unbridled boast of false, worldly glory and the spiritual, exalted simplicity of the inner, real glory that is pleasing to God. After all, Isaiah is about showing the way that leads via the judgment on the false glory to the true glory, that of the Messiah and His kingdom.

It is not possible for us to say something about every decoration. Nevertheless, some remarks can be made that shed some light on this section. It is remarkable that Isaiah mentions a total of twenty-one decorations. The number twenty-one is three times seven, which symbolically indicates the fullness (three) and the perfection (seven) of the frivolity of the decorations of the women. In their appearance, these fashion dolls are a reflection of the disgusting softness of their husbands.

The description of the decoration begins with the “anklets”, also mentioned in verse 16, and the “headbands” (verse 18), i.e. the decoration of the feet and the head. This is a reminder of God’s judgment on His people that He pronounced at the beginning of this book: “From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it” (Isa 1:6a). The people do not want to see this sick state, but want to cover it with all kinds of decorations all over the body, from head to toe, in order to make them attractive instead of repulsive.

Furthermore, the enumeration is not from bottom to top or vice versa, nor from outside to inside. There is no particular order in it. The enumeration is arbitrary and thus corresponds to the capricious behavior of the women.

The “crescent ornaments” (verse 18) are jewels in the shape of the moon, possibly a reference to the moon as an object of worship. They are captured from the Midianites in the days of Gideon (Jdg 8:26). They are worn around the neck and are also worn by camels (Jdg 8:21). The “veils” (verse 19) correspond to today’s ‘*nikab*’, a kind of burka, but as a separate garment.

“The ankle chains” (verse 20) cause them to make small and graceful passes. “The sashes” are the ornamental sashes the bride wears on the day of her wedding. “The amulets” show their superstition because they are worn to protect them from the incantations of sorcerers. “The cloaks” (verse 22) are wide shawls, just as Ruth wears one when she goes to Boaz in her most beautiful clothes (Rth 3:15).

The description of some of the garments mentioned shows a mixture of elements that are also found in the priest’s garments with elements that belong to idolatry. Thus, “the headbands” (verse 20) and “the undergarments” (verse 23) are also mentioned as priest’s garments (Exo 39:28; 29:5,8). Garments speak in Scripture of the behavior we exhibit. Their garments makes the women of Jerusalem look like a decorated Christmas tree. They dress like this to draw the attention and affection of the people around them. It does not occur to them to please the LORD in their behavior.

The LORD will work a total reversal (verse 24). He will take away from the women everything with which they wallpaper themselves as garbage. How miserable they will look and feel then! A woman who came to repentance and did not put her make-up on her face anymore, said that in the beginning she felt ‘naked’. This is how it will be with these women.

In flowery, powerful language the LORD proposes how He will change everything they mean to be attractive to others into something that will repel others. She will look miserable because of mistreatment and will be too dirty to deal with. For example, the smell of perfume will be replaced by “putrefaction”, for example from festering wounds. The “belt” with which they flaunt will change into a “rope” with which they will be dragged into captivity.

Their “well-set hair” will be shaved off. For a woman, “a plucked-out scalp” or baldness, means great defamation. Bald shaving happens to captured women (Deu 21:12). Their “beauty” will be marred by “branding” put on their bodies with a branding iron. It is the indelible mark that they are in slavery (cf. Neh 9:36).

Their “men” to whom they do not listen, but over whom they rule and of whom they make use of (Amos 4:1b), will fall by the sword (verse 25).

Their “mighty ones”, whom they think will protect them, will be killed in battle. The “gates” (verse 26), the places of jurisdiction and guarding, will no longer provide safety and protection. The enemy will take possession of them. This will happen about 150 years later, when Judah is besieged and conquered by Babylon and taken away into exile. As a result, the city will “sit on the ground”, a paragon of great mourning and utter disaster (Job 2:13).

## Isaiah 4

### **Isa 4:1 | Begging of the Daughters of Zion**

*1 For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!"*

This verse belongs to the previous chapter and continues with the description of the consequences of the Divine judgment on the proud, wicked daughters of Zion. The expression "in that day" (cf. verse 2) refers to "the last days" (Isa 2:2), the end time, although there will be a pre-fulfillment at the destruction of Jerusalem by actual enemies.

It seems that the daughters of Zion became widows because of the destruction of the city (cf. Isa 3:25). There will be such a shortage of men – the ratio in the population between men and women will be one to seven (= many) – that the women will look for a man, which is an unnatural way, because normally the man is looking for a woman. Those who in better times have thought that several men would gain favor with them, will now compete with other women to gain favor with the first man they meet.

It is not at all about wanting a man who could take care of them. That is not what they desire, for they will provide for themselves. They will voluntarily release that man from the obligation he has by law to care for his wife (Exo 21:10). All they ask is to be allowed to bear his name, which would happen if he were to marry her. By marrying, a woman takes her husband's name – also something that is no longer taken for granted in our time. She only wants him to marry her in order to get rid of the slander of being alone and unmarried (Isa 54:4). She is driven by pure selfishness.

### **Isa 4:2-3 | Christ and Zion**

*2 In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth [will be] the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel. 3 It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem.*

Against the black background of the painting of the calamity of Zion because of the judgment a beautiful scene of restoration is shown here from verse 2 onward. After the first trial with His people, which is broadly measured in Isaiah 1, the LORD has already given a promise of restoration (Isa 2:1-4). That restoration is about the same time as here. Only in Isaiah 2 the glory of Zion is described from the point of view of the nations, while here it is the glory of Zion from the point of view of the LORD.

Isaiah here again makes the great jump from the present to the glorious time under the reign of the Lord Jesus, for He is the LORD. As so often the expression "in that day" (verse 2) refers to that time. That expression is also found in verse 1 and describes there the terrible consequences of judgment. That both verse 1 and verse 2 begin with it, accentuates the contrast.

Some translations have instead of "the Branch [or: Sprout] of the LORD" erroneously "what the LORD makes sprout out". For it is not about a *work* of the LORD that He makes something to sprout, but about a *Person*, "the Sprout", and that is the Messiah. The word 'sprout' contains the thought of the power of life (Isa 11:1). The expression 'sprout' is already seen by the Aramean Targum as an indication of the Messiah, that is the Lord Jesus.

Both the Hebrew word for 'sprout', *tsemach*, and the Greek word for it, *anatole*, also means (sun)rising. "Sunrise" is also a name of the Lord Jesus. This is how Zechariah, the father of John the baptist, calls Him (Lk 1:78). However, normally the 'rising' (sun) or the 'sprout' (plant) comes from the bottom to the top, while the Lord Jesus is the "Sunrise from on high". He comes from the top down.

The name Sprout for the Lord Jesus we find in different compositions and shows us each time a different glory of Him that we can connect with the Gospels. He is called:

1. "The Sprout [or: Branch] of the LORD" (Isa 4:2). This is the Name that reminds us of the Gospel according to John. This Name speaks of His God-head which is brilliantly described by John in his Gospel.
2. "A righteous Sprout [or: Branch]" (Jer 23:5; 33:15). This is in connection with Him as the righteous King. This is how we see Him in the Gospel according to Matthew.

3. “My servant the Sprout [or: Branch]” (Zec 3:8). In the Gospel according to Mark we see Him as Servant.

4. “A man whose name is Sprout [or: Branch]” (Zec 6:12). That brings us to the Gospel according to Luke, because in that Gospel He is presented as Man.

The Lord Jesus “will be beautiful and glorious” or, as can also be translated, He will be “for glory and for beauty”. These words remind us of the description of the priestly garments (Exo 28:2,40). He is a glorious ornament for the remnant. It is a piece of jewelry of a completely different nature than the jewelry the conceited women of Zion adorn themselves with (Isa 3:16-23).

Also “the fruit of the earth” or “the fruit of the land” (that is Israel) is an expression we can apply to the Messiah. It shows Him as the immaculate Man, Who sprouts up in the midst of all death and destruction caused by the lineage of the first Adam. He is the “root out of parched ground” (Isa 53:2).

Here we see God’s wisdom as an answer to the problem of the sin of His people. For the first time in this book we see a Person Who will act on behalf of the remnant of the people. We will meet Him more often.

He connects Himself in splendor with those who are “of the survivors of Israel”, that is with the believing remnant, or the third part of the people who remain after the judgments (Zec 13:8). For them, He will be “the pride and the adornment [literally: glory]” at that time. He will free them from His enemies and be their Head. His glory will shine upon them. The fact that they ‘survived’ indicates how fierce and devastating the great tribulation will be, which is spoken about elsewhere.

Through His connection with them, this remnant will be called “holy” (verse 3) and will be able to take the place of Israel. This goes beyond *being* holy, because it implies not only a separated place, but also a special relationship. It is similar to a girl who is called “holy” in the Hebrew language because of her union with her fiancé. That it is a remnant is strikingly expressed in the words “left” and “remains”. They have not perished in the judgments and may enter the realm of peace (cf. Mt 24:40-41).



Through the holiness that will characterize the remnant, Israel will respond to its original calling (Exo 19:6a). It is a chosen remnant consisting of all those who are written down in the book of God's counsel in connection with Jerusalem (cf. Lk 10:20; Phil 4:3; Heb 12:23; Rev 17:8).

This important theme is elaborated in detail in Isaiah 40-66. In that part, the place of Israel as the failing servant of the LORD – Israel who is deaf and blind – (Isa 42:19) is taken by the perfect Servant of the LORD, the Lord Jesus. He then makes Himself one with the believing remnant of Israel, through which Israel, then restored, will again be seen as the servant of the LORD.

It is also our calling to be completely separated for God. Because He is holy, we must be too: “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1Pet 1:16). Therefore, we are exhorted to “cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit” (2Cor 7:1).

#### **Isa 4:4-6 | Zion Cleansed and Protected**

*4 When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, 5 then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. 6 There will be a shelter to [give] shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.*

The holiness of verse 3 is the result of what the Lord (*Adonai*) is going to do in verse 4. The people who first refused to listen to the commandment to cleanse themselves (Isa 1:16) are again called “daughters of Zion” (cf. Isa 3:16), for in the coming day the Lord Himself will cleanse them. This cleansing is necessary because they have become filthy through sin. He will cleanse the people by judgment, by baptism with fire through the Spirit (Mt 3:11b). The Spirit is not only the Spirit of grace, but also of judgment and of burning. That is why that day – “burning like a furnace” (Mal 4:1) of which the heat is many times greater than that of ordinary fire – will come to burn and wash away all wickedness.

The “filth” points to their inner depravity camouflaged by their party clothes (Isa 3:16-24). “The bloodshed” refers to the violence against the poor and miserable of God’s people (Isa 3:13-15). Prophetically we see here a reference to the two great sins of the people of Israel: idolatry on the one hand and the rejection (blood guilt!) of Christ on the other hand. This is elaborated in Isaiah 40-66. Only after the cleansing of this the LORD will be able to reveal His pleasure in this remnant to them.

He shows His pleasure in them by creating a kind of canopy over them, which is a canopy as it is placed above a groom or a throne in order to increase its splendor (verse 5). The word “create” indicates that it is a splendor newly created by the LORD for this occasion.

It is a beautiful picture to paint the relationship between the LORD and Israel. Day and night, this beautiful canopy will cover that entire area. This is similar to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire that accompanied Israel during the journey through the wilderness, when the LORD was also with them as a covering (Exo 13:21; 14:19-20; Num 9:15). He was also with them – only during the wilderness journey – as a pillar guiding them. At Zion, the people have arrived at their final destination, as it were, and these Divine symbols of protection remain present.

At the time of the first temple, the holy of holies was always filled with the cloud of God’s glory, the sign of His presence – only at the dedication of the temple did the cloud fill the entire building. Here the cloud is present over all of Zion – “over all the glory” – so that the whole of Mount Zion can be referred to as holy of holies, the place where God Himself is present.

The word “create” is also used in the story of creation in Genesis 1. Isaiah also uses this word several times in the second part of his book (Isa 41:20; 45:8; 48:7; 65:17-18). With this he indicates that the Creator is realizing His ultimate purposes in a new, unexpected way.

Incessantly the LORD will find His joy in Zion and what is directly connected to her. Equally He rejoices when His people gather there to have a feast to His honor. Since nature can give both heat and rain in the realm of peace, He has made a shelter for Zion for those circumstances as well (verse 6).

With Isaiah 4 ends a section that begins with a dark painting of the sinful and depraved condition of the people, resulting in the judgment of the LORD. Then our eye is turned to the glory of the Branch or Sprout of the LORD in Whom all hope is found. This concludes this part. We will see such a development in the description more often.

## Isaiah 5

### Introduction

In this chapter we have three sections:

1. The LORD and the failed vineyard of Israel (verses 1-7);
2. a sixfold woe over the people and their leaders (verses 8-23);
3. the judgments of the LORD on the people (verses 24-30).

### Isa 5:1-7 | The Vineyard Song

*1 Let me sing now for my well-beloved  
A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.  
My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.  
2 He dug it all around, removed its stones,  
And planted it with the choicest vine.  
And He built a tower in the middle of it  
And also hewed out a wine vat in it;  
Then He expected [it] to produce [good] grapes,  
But it produced [only] worthless ones.  
3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,  
Judge between Me and My vineyard.  
4 "What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?  
Why, when I expected [it] to produce [good]  
grapes did it produce worthless ones?  
5 "So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:  
I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed;  
I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.  
6 "I will lay it waste;  
It will not be pruned or hoed,  
But briars and thorns will come up.  
I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it."  
7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel  
And the men of Judah His delightful plant.*

*Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;  
For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.*

Isaiah, in whom the Spirit of Christ speaks, now uses a new way to speak to Israel, namely through a song. It is a song in which he sings the love of the LORD for His people (verse 1). He wants to sing for his Well-beloved, the LORD. He is like the friend of the Bridegroom who rejoices over the Bridegroom (Jn 3:29-30). The LORD is the object of his song.

It is a love song, just like Song of Songs, and is about a vineyard (cf. Song 2:15). However, the identity of those involved remains covered. Isaiah does not mention any names. Nathan also uses this veiled way of telling a narrative in the history he tells David (2Sam 12:1-4). It is not said who the “well-beloved” and “beloved” is and who the “vineyard” is. This holds the attention of the listeners. As the song progresses, their indignation about the vineyard increases until at the end of the section, in verse 7, the true identity of the Beloved and of the vineyard is revealed like a bolt from the blue.

In the song we are moved to a courtroom (verses 3-4; cf. Isa 1:18; 3:14-15), where the song becomes an indictment because of the lack of response to the love and patience of the Beloved. The song ends with leaving the figurative description to identify the house of Israel – for that is the vineyard – as the object of God’s anger (verses 5-7).

Isaiah sings about what the Well-beloved – that is, as we know, the LORD – has done for His people. In the picture of the vineyard he sings about Israel as God saw the people at the beginning of their history in the promised land. The vineyard stood on a “fertile hill”, so on fertile ground (Deu 8:7-9), which is the land of Canaan.

Then it says: “He dug it all around, removed its stones” (verse 2). This means that He drove the nations with their idols out of the land. By the “choicest vine” that He planted the Israelites are meant (Jer 2:21; Psa 80:8-9; Hos 10:1). Furthermore, He built “a tower” in the middle of it, which refers to the central city of Jerusalem that He built to establish His Name (Pro 18:10). That tower was also a watchtower where the priests lived who had to guard against the intrusion of wrong influences.

The “wine vat” that He hewed out of it, can be recognized in the temple. There the people would bring Him the fruit of the land, the sacrifices, in order to express their worship and praise by the working of His Spirit. He was looking forward to that glorious result after all the work He had put into it. The end of the song, however, is an anticlimax. Instead of the good grapes He could expect from all His efforts, the vine produced worthless grapes.

After Isaiah sang in his song the detailed description of the efforts of the LORD for an optimal result, we suddenly see ourselves moved into a courtroom (verse 3). The LORD Himself speaks now, a speaking that continues through verse 7. He asks “the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah” in a trial to judge between Him and His vineyard. He asks them for a verdict by which He forces them to thoroughly reflect on the situation.

He is the Prosecutor, Who at the same time defends Himself by asking them what they think He could have done more than He did (verse 4). Were His expectations too high by expecting good grapes after taking so much care of them, while it only produced worthless grapes? To ask the question is to answer it.

The way in which the LORD addresses these people is remarkable. He poses as someone who has a complaint against the vineyard and asks for their judgment. As if they as righteous judges were able to judge! But the men of Judah are the plants themselves. In a subtle way the LORD actually asks for a willingness to judge themselves. Instead of making an accusation, their judgment is asked for, by which the love, which is the source of this approach, hopes for willingness to self-examination. But there is no answer.

We hear how God wonders out loud whether the vineyard bears the fruit He could expect after all He has done to it. This is a principle that can be generally applied, not only to the Jews, but also to the church and to each individual. If the church has received more than the Jews, God has the right to expect the church to produce more for Him. If someone claims to know the glory of Christ, then He may expect his life corresponds to that. That is the true fruit bearing for which the believer is on earth.

The Prosecutor then announces what He is going to do with His vineyard (verse 5). Preceded by a solemn “so now” He announces the verdict of His worthless vineyard. After all, a vineyard that does not produce fruit is completely worthless. The only thing for which a vine is useful is to bear fruit. Its wood is without fruit too worthless to be suitable for anything but firewood (Eze 15:2-5).

The Prosecutor Himself will also carry out the verdict. His repayment for their rebellion is imminent and inevitable. He will take away their protection, “his hedge”, so that they become a prey for the nations. As a result, the land will be consumed. He “will break down its wall” so that the enemy can enter to trample them.

He will lay the whole land “waste” (verse 6). He will do this so thoroughly that it will not be “pruned” or “hoed,” which means that no activity will take place for the purpose of bearing fruit. Thus, instead of delicious fruit, the land will produce only “briars and thorns”, the symbols of sin (Gen 3:18a).

In verse 6b the listeners suddenly hear that the vine grower, the beloved one who speaks of his vineyard, “will charge the clouds to rain no rain on it” (cf. Deu 11:17a). Until now they have listened to the song without thinking that the beloved or the vineyard represent certain persons. But now they hear something amazing, something that makes them suspicious. They hear the owner of the vineyard say that he will “charge the clouds to rain no rain on it”. Surely only the LORD can say such a thing, isn’t it? How would a *man* charge the clouds to do something? Surely only *God* can do that, isn’t it? And indeed, so it is.

This is the time for the explanation of the imagery (verse 7). The Prosecutor suddenly confronts the house of Israel with the fact that they are the vineyard of the previous verses and that He, the LORD, is the Well-beloved about Whom the song is about. It seems as if we hear Nathan say to David, after he has told his parable: “You are the man!” (2Sam 12:7a). The Prosecutor is not Isaiah, but the LORD Himself!

In short, the vineyard is Israel, the joy of the LORD and the work of His hands to His glorification (Isa 60:21; 61:3). The joy He wanted to find in His people also has to do with His love for them. They are “His delight-

ful plant". He chose them out of all nations to be His people, the special object of His love. That is why He took so much care of them. But instead of finding justice and righteousness that He expects as a fruit, He finds oppression and violence. That is why the judgment on Israel can no longer be averted.

Verse 7b in Hebrew is a beautiful wordplay: *mispat* – *mispach* which can be translated with "good governance" – "blood governance" and: *tsedakah* – *tseakah* which can be translated "law observance" – "law oppression" (= crying of oppressed persons). Just as these words, at least in Hebrew, resemble each other, so in a certain sense the worthless grapes resemble the good grapes. In the same way the evildoers look like religious people, whereas in reality they are full of iniquity (cf. Mt 23:28).

The lesson of this section is clear. It is possible to routinely perform religious acts, to live outwardly in conformity with Scripture, while the true dedication of the heart to Christ is lacking. The first love is gone and with it the true spiritual power. This opens the door to ever coarser forms of evil. The Lord stands at the door and He knocks (Rev 3:20). He is waiting for an answer from everyone who truly desires to have fellowship with Him in truth, in accordance with His will and way.

The vineyard is destroyed, but not forever. Later we find the promise that the vineyard will be restored (Isa 27:2-6). That will happen in the end time. It does not mean that until that time God is without vineyard and without fruit from the vineyard.

First of all, the Lord Jesus has taken the place of the failing Israel as the true vine. He says of Himself: "I am the true vine" (Jn 15:1). His life was all joy to God. He is the true 'delightful plant' of God, because in Him God finds all His delight.

Secondly, the Lord Jesus shows in a parable that the vineyard, the kingdom of God, will be connected with another people, professing Christianity (Mt 21:33-43). In professing Christianity, everyone who is connected to the true vine, Christ, bears fruit for God (Jn 15:2,8).

### **Isa 5:8-10 | The First Woe**

| 8 Woe to those who add house to house [and] join field to field,



*Until there is no more room,  
 So that you have to live alone in the midst of the land!  
 9 In my ears the LORD of hosts [has sworn], "Sure-  
 ly, many houses shall become desolate,  
 [Even] great and fine ones, without occupants.  
 10 "For ten acres of vineyard will yield [only] one bath [of wine],  
 And a homer of seed will yield [but] an ephah of grain."*

The parable of the vineyard is followed by a sixfold "woe" over the "worthless" grapes (cf. verse 2) produced by the people. In it God pleads against the people and shows them their sins, their 'worthless grapes', in detail. We also see this order in the Gospel according to Matthew. First the Lord Jesus tells a parable of a vineyard (Mt 21:33-41). A little further, He pronounces a sevenfold woe on the leaders of the people (Mt 23:13-36).

The first woe of Isaiah is about greed and greediness (verse 8; cf. Isa 57:17; Mic 2:2). We recognize this 'worthless grape' in the unbridled materialism of our days. It is the urge for always more. If necessary, others are robbed of their possessions. The picture is selfishness in its highest form, someone who has surrounded himself with everything he wants and lets no one else share in it. This goes against God's commandments not to steal and not to covet (Exo 20:15,17), by which He protects the private property of the members of His people. It is the property He has entrusted to each member.

Those who are guilty of this greed violate the LORD's ordinance (Num 36:7; 1Kgs 21:1-3), for the land always remains the property of the LORD (Lev 25:23). They do not think of returning the property to the original owner in the year of jubilee (Lev 25:10,13). Had they done so, they would have received rich fruit (Lev 25:18-19).

The LORD has communicated the judgment on this dealing to Isaiah in his ears, which means to him personally. He has been told that the LORD will see to it that they will not benefit from their greed (cf. Hag 1:6,9). Their beautiful houses will be destroyed and life will disappear from them because the occupants will perish (verse 9). A house can still be so beautiful, but when life is gone from it, it is dead.

Also the land will barely yield anything (verse 10). A vineyard of “ten acres” will yield only between twenty and forty-five liters of wine – a bath is presumably between twenty and forty-five liters. And a homer of seed – a homer is presumably between two hundred and four hundred and fifty liters – will yield only an ephah – an ephah is presumably between twenty and forty-five liters. This means that the sown seed will yield only ten percent or less.

To this we can apply the saying: ill-gotten gains never benefit anyone. The lesson is: if we forget that everything we have belongs to Christ and appropriate it to ourselves, spiritual dryness and lack will strike us (cf. Psa 106:15).

### **Isa 5:11-17 | The Second Woe**

*11 Woe to those who rise early in the morn-  
ing that they may pursue strong drink,  
Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them!  
12 Their banquets are [accompanied] by lyre and  
harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine;  
But they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD,  
Nor do they consider the work of His hands.  
13 Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge;  
And their honorable men are famished,  
And their multitude is parched with thirst.  
14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its throat and  
opened its mouth without measure;  
And Jerusalem's splendor, her multitude, her din [of rev-  
elry] and the jubilant within her, descend [into it].  
15 So the [common] man will be humbled and  
the man of [importance] abased,  
The eyes of the proud also will be abased.  
16 But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment,  
And the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness.  
17 Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture,  
And strangers will eat in the waste places of the wealthy.*

The second woe (verse 11) is about the hedonists, people addicted to pleasure, the “lovers of pleasure” (2Tim 3:4). They see life as a great feast and drink themselves full of intoxicating “strong drink”, which in those days was made from fermented dates, honey, and barley. Such a life is worthless, it can be compared to worthless grapes. There is nothing in their lives in which God can find joy. On the contrary, He is disgusted by it. People who live like that are addicted to that way of life. Someone who wakes up in the morning and as first of his action reach for the bottle is certainly addicted to alcohol (cf. Ecc 10:16b; Acts 2:13-15). If you are intoxicated, you at least forget the nasty things in life. It is like opium.

Inside, inwardly, intoxicated and outside surrounded and stunned by noise is the ‘ideal’ situation to ensure that they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, that they have no interest in them (verse 12; cf. Amos 6:4-5). They do not “consider the work of His hands”. They are completely blind for what the LORD does.

Today we see how people are completely absorbed in alcohol and drugs, in heavy metal and death metal music that makes them insensitive to any signal that warns them of the deadly consequences. As a result, they sink lower than animals that instinctively still make good choices (Isa 1:3). It must be clear to us that these things can also be found among those who call themselves Christians. The use of strong drink and drugs is not just a practice of the world around us, but occurs extensively among Christian youth.

This lack of understanding of the LORD’s deeds, this lack of knowledge of Him, becomes fatal to them (verse 13; Hos 4:6a). As a result, they do not realize that they will go into exile. The high-income elite will “famish”. The “multitude”, the wicked ‘ordinary’ population, will die of thirst.

They will meet the skinny reaper, who with his throat wide open and his mouth wide open like a greedy monster is ready to devour them (verse 14). Without them noticing it, the nobility and the average human being are hopping to that all and everyone devouring monster. In this way they descend dancing and swinging down into the endless black hole.

Then it’s over and done with all that cheering and hopping. Of all the pride of both the common man and the man of prestige nothing remains.

They both bend their knees under judgment. The common man, like the distinguished man, has lived only for himself and was not inferior to the distinguished man. Both have had their eyes open to everything in pride, except for the LORD. Their eyes will be abased forever (verse 15).

God will enforce recognition of His attributes and rights (Phil 2:9-11). The downfall of the arrogant man is the result of the judgment of “the LORD of hosts” (verse 16). He will be *exalted* by the exercise of judgment, which sharply contrasts with the *humiliation* of man. This sharp contrast also exists between the *unholy* behavior of man and the *holiness* of God, Who is emphasized here as “the holy God”. His holiness is expressed in the maintenance of His righteousness.

Righteousness and holiness are the characteristics of the new man, who “has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph 4:24). As a result, the believer who belongs to the church is able to do righteousness in the midst of evil. While he is surrounded by evil, he can live in holiness, which means separated to God.

When the people are gone into exile, shepherds of foreign nations will let their sheep graze in the deserted land as if it were their own (verse 17). Foreigners will feast on what God intended for His own people, but which His people have feasted on themselves in unbridled greed. After judgment, they leave everything behind and strangers will eat it. This is literally fulfilled by the Arabs who lived there for centuries, while Jerusalem was in the hands of islamic peoples.

### Isa 5:18-19 | The Third Woe

18 Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood,  
And sin as if with cart ropes;  
19 Who say, “Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see [it];  
And let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near  
And come to pass, that we may know [it]!”

The third woe is pronounced on the next ‘worthless grape’ and that is on those who are addicted to iniquity. With lying tricks they commit iniquity (verse 18). It is not without sarcasm that Isaiah depicts animals carrying

a burden. The burden of iniquity lies high on the cart of sin which these people drag with ropes. The underlying idea is that the act of committing small iniquities, “cords of falsehood”, will gradually lead to coarser iniquities, “sin as if with cart ropes”. They believe that they are in control of their sinful activities. But it is the other way around: “He will be held with the cords of his sin” (Pro 5:22).

While, as slaves to sin, they plod toward judgment, they are challenging God (verse 19). With boasting language they defy Him to put His warnings into action: ‘If you are there, show yourself, do something!’ This is the height of audacity and blasphemy (cf. Mt 27:42; 2Pet 3:2-3; Ecc 8:11; Jer 17:15). They don’t hesitate to abuse and scorn the name of “the Holy One of Israel”, the name Isaiah always uses to make God’s holiness stand out in the face of the unholiness of the people. It shows their hardening, which Isaiah must seal in the next chapter (Isa 6:9-10).

### Isa 5:20 | The Fourth Woe

*20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;  
Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;  
Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*

In this verse Isaiah points to the fourth ‘worthless grape’: turning moral principles upside down. About this comes the fourth woe. Knowingly and willingly they turn values and norms upside down. They reverse everything God has said. What God calls evil, they call good and vice versa. That is an abomination to the LORD (Pro 17:15). They do the same with darkness and light and with bitter and sweet. False teachings are presented as truth and the truth is made out to be a lie.

This is highly topical in our days. Gays have to be able to get married and marriage as such is presented as a squeezing yoke. Abortion, i.e. murder in the womb, must be possible, but the death penalty – which God prescribes in case of murder – is abolished as being murder and inhumane. It is the foolish reversal of things by man without God.

First comes the negative, to which they assign a positive meaning. The consequence cannot be other than that they change the positive into something negative. We see this strongly with the Pharisees who attribute the

work of the Lord Jesus that He does through the Holy Spirit to Beelzebub (Mk 3:22-29).

“It is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God” (Jer 2:19), but they say it is good. They imitate the devil who told Eve that it was not evil, but good to eat from the forbidden tree. Asaph says: “The nearness of God is my good” (Psa 73:28), but they say it is evil. In everything they deliberately contradict the precepts and the revealed will of the LORD. Not only do they declare His will invalid, but they twist it and knowingly go against it. This is one of the characteristics of the end time (Rom 1:32).

### **Isa 5:21 | The Fifth Woe**

*21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes  
And clever in their own sight!*

The fifth woe strikes the pride and complacency of those who are wise in their own eyes (cf. Pro 3:7). This too is such a ‘worthless grape’. Someone who reverses values considers himself wise and his own opinion clever. Someone who boasts of his own wisdom and intellect, produces an unbearable stench. This attitude stems from the attitude we see under the two previous woes. It is an attempt at self-justification, which leads to the searing of the conscience.

### **Isa 5:22-23 | The Sixth Woe**

*22 Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine  
And valiant men in mixing strong drink,  
23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe,  
And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!*

The sixth woe comes over the leaders of the people. They too are totally rotten. They are now described as lovers of wine, men who boast of knowing how to prepare it (verse 22). What they do is also worthless and stinks. With an undertone of sarcasm Isaiah compares these leaders to “heroes” and calls them “valiant men”.

It’s the boasters, the brawlers, people who are easily bribed, because they don’t follow any principles (verse 23). Because of their misty gaze, they have no view of the law. They are very loose with the law and twist it when

they can benefit from it. They are addicted to power and enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. We see this with all kinds of rulers throughout the centuries. We also see it with the false shepherds (Eze 34:1-6) and in the characteristics of the antichrist (Zec 11:15-17).

The spiritual counterpart of “being heroes in drinking wine” is being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). This leads to a clear discernment between what is of God and what is not.

### Isa 5:24-30 | The Distant Nation

24 *Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble  
 And dry grass collapses into the flame,  
 So their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust;  
 For they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts  
 And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*  
 25 *On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people,  
 And He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down.  
 And the mountains quaked, and their corpses  
 lay like refuse in the middle of the streets.  
 For all this His anger is not spent,  
 But His hand is still stretched out.*  
 26 *He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation,  
 And will whistle for it from the ends of the earth;  
 And behold, it will come with speed swiftly.*  
 27 *No one in it is weary or stumbles,  
 None slumbers or sleeps;  
 Nor is the belt at its waist undone,  
 Nor its sandal strap broken.*  
 28 *Its arrows are sharp and all its bows are bent;  
 The hoofs of its horses seem like flint and its [chariot] wheels like a whirlwind.*  
 29 *Its roaring is like a lioness, and it roars like young lions;  
 It growls as it seizes the prey  
 And carries [it] off with no one to deliver [it].*  
 30 *And it will growl over it in that day like the roaring of the sea.  
 If one looks to the land, behold, there is darkness [and] distress;  
 Even the light is darkened by its clouds.*

With a “therefore” and an “on this account” (verses 24-25) God’s irrevocable judgment follows. The vineyard (verses 1-7) turns out to be totally depraved. There is only one remedy: total judgment. The Divine judgment on all this is compared to a “tongue of fire” (verse 24) which will lick up everything they boast about as if it were “stubble” and “dry grass”. In the same sense, “their root will become like rot” and will have no life force to make the fruit tree bear fruit above the ground. As a result, “their blossom”, their splendor and the promise of fruit, will “blow away as dust”. No fruit will emerge and there will be nothing left of what seemed to become a harvest.

This judgment will affect them because they have “rejected the law of the LORD of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel”. They treated with contempt the law, the written word of the LORD, as well as the oral statements of the Holy One of Israel through His prophets. The title “the Holy One of Israel”, regularly mentioned by Isaiah, makes clear in a special way the enormous distance that exists between man’s sin and the holiness of God.

Their rejection of Him has burned His anger against them (verse 25). Because they have rejected Him, He will send a mighty enemy against them, His people. Because of that enemy, He stretches His hand against them to strike them down, that is to punish them. The thorny hedge and the walls of the vineyard are removed so that this enemy can come unhindered to destroy them, as it is said in verse 5 in the song of the vineyard.

The marching of this enemy – Assyria, prophetically the king of the North – will make the mountains quake. Because of his attacks, the streets will be filled with corpses as if it were refuse. And that is not the end of the judgments. The people will be beaten even more fiercely. Therefore, “His anger is not spent, but His hand is still stretched out” (verse 25b), an expression that describes the progress of God’s judgment (Isa 9:11,16,20; 10:4).

In verses 26-30 follows a description of the invasion of the Assyrians. The description also refers to the invasion of the king of the North in the end time (Dan 11:40). The LORD gives the starting signal for the advancement of the enemy. He lifts up a standard as a sign for the enemy to go to Jerusalem and fight as His army against His apostate people (verse 26). What



a change compared to the time when He was their “Banner” (Exo 17:15)! Just as a beekeeper whistles his bees to himself, so the LORD will gather the enemy’s armies as His bees (Isa 7:18). They will come, hasty and quick.

It is a tireless army because it is provided with superhuman strength by the LORD (verse 27). They have no need for sleep or rest. There is no question of dozing off. Material failure will not occur. What the LORD did to His people in the wilderness, He does here with the army He sends to His people (cf. Deu 8:4).

It is an army fully prepared for its task, with soldiers holding the weapons for immediate use (verse 28). They proceed at lightning speed, without fear and without compassion. The army attacks like a lion, roars, grabs its prey, and drags it away (in captivity) without any possibility of escape, and without anyone being able to come to their aid (verse 29).

The expression “in that day” shows that the events that were coming then will repeat themselves in the future and then lead to a final result. To “growl over it ... like the roaring of the sea” (verse 30) is an indication for the advancing armies that take possession of the land like flooding waters (cf. Isa 8:7; Dan 9:26). For God’s people there will be only “darkness [and] distress” in that day, with no view of light. “For what purpose [will] the day of the LORD [be] to you? It [will be] darkness and not light” (Amos 5:18).

## Isaiah 6

### Introduction

Before the announced judgments (Isa 5:26-30) are carried out, the Holy Spirit now takes time to describe Isaiah's calling to be a prophet. Its purpose is to show that a believing remnant is always spared when the LORD is about to judge (cf. Rev 7:3; 9:4). This remnant humbles itself under the discipling hand of the LORD and trembles at His word (Isa 66:2b). Isaiah himself is a type of this believing remnant.

### Isa 6:1-4 | Isaiah Sees the LORD in the Temple

*1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.*

This chapter is closely connected with the previous one. The sad state of affairs described in Isaiah 5 exists during the reign of King Uzziah. In 739 BC, the year of death of this king, Isaiah gets a vision in which he sees the glory of the LORD, the eternal King. We see here immediately the great contrast between an earthly king and the LORD. Earthly kings come and go and die, changes of thrones take place, but the LORD is King on His throne forever.

The whole scene Isaiah sees is full of holiness. That forms a sharp contrast with the condition of the people on earth. Isaiah sees "the Lord [*Adonai*, the absolute, sovereign Lord] sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted" (verse 1). The Gospel according to John tells us that Isaiah sees here the glory of the Lord Jesus (Jn 12:37-41). Of that glory Isaiah can only mention the "train of

His robe". The train, the lower part of His garment (cf. Exo 28:33-34), fills the temple.

It refers to the Lord Jesus on earth. In Him God has become visible, Whom we cannot see according to His Being, because He "dwells in unapproachable light" (1Tim 6:16). He covers Himself "with light as with a cloak" (Psa 104:2a) and fills His heavenly dwelling, just as the cloud of His glory once filled the tabernacle (Exo 40:35). When Moses and the elders saw the God of Israel, they could only describe what was under His feet (Exo 24:9-10).

Three times these verses talk about 'filling' and 'full', each time using the same Hebrew word *male* (verses 1,3,4). Twice it is connected with the temple and once with the earth. Here we see on the one hand the supreme sovereignty of God. On the other hand we also see how He is present in what is His. That He transcends everything does not mean that He is at a great distance from it. He is present in His temple and in His creation. His exaltation above everything and His involvement in everything are always in perfect balance in God's Word.

The "seraphim" (*saraph* = fiery or burning), the fiery guardians of the holiness of the LORD (Gen 3:24), dare not behold this glory (verse 2; cf. Heb 12:29). Therefore, as a sign of awe, they cover their faces with two of their wings. In the light of this glory they further indicate the humility of their exalted service by covering their feet with two other wings. With two more, moving wings, they show the continual readiness to perform that service.

We also see first the wings with which they cover themselves and then the wings of the service. This indicates that service can only happen if we forget ourselves, cover ourselves, as it were. That is the case when we are in the presence of God.

In their reverence for the holiness of the LORD, they call out to one another a threefold 'holy' (verse 3; cf. Rev 4:8). The three times 'holy' is possibly an allusion to the Divine trinity. A threefold use of a word indicates in Hebrew the highest form, the superlative. The fact that they are calling this out to each other, one to the other, points to the complete unanimity they have about it. There is no difference. In heaven all the inhabitants of heaven are in perfect agreement about the holiness of God. They are not

concerned with themselves, but with His glory and holiness. This should also be the case with us (Eph 5:19).

The sight of this threefold holiness has such a tremendous effect on Isaiah that it will also characterize his service. 'Holy' means 'to take a separate place in relation to something else', and not only in relation to evil. Thus the seventh day is 'sanctified', i.e. set apart from the other days (Gen 2:3). The LORD is also holy with respect to the holy angels, that is, He is utterly exalted above them in glory and majesty.

The angels also proclaim the counsel of God, which is that His glory fills the whole earth (Num 14:21; cf. Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14). In so doing, they proclaim a prophecy, for the time is not yet come. The glory of the LORD will be seen and acknowledged worldwide, which is not yet the case (Jer 31:34; Phil 2:11).

The Hebrew word for "glory", *kabod*, is used for God in His revelation to His creatures. The essence of His Godhead is unfathomable, but something of His glory can be seen if it pleases Him to reveal it (Exo 33:17-23; Eze 1:28). In a perfect way, that glory has become visible to those who believe in the Lord Jesus (Jn 1:14; 1Jn 1:1-4).

The effect of this tribute is overwhelming. There is movement at the entrance of the temple (verse 4) and the dwelling place itself is filled with the smoke (Exo 19:18) from the altar of incense, the symbol of worship. It speaks of the personal glories of the Lord Jesus. His glory fills the house.

This also has meaning for us. When the Lord Jesus died, He accomplished the work of God completely. Because of this, heaven is opened for redeemed sinners, so that they can approach God in worship. The throne of God has now become "the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16). This tremendous fact of opening heaven for people has been accompanied by the trembling of the earth (cf. Mt 27:51). When believers enter the sanctuary to honor and plead with God, there can also be such a powerful effect (Acts 4:31).

Also filling the house is something we can experience. When God's Spirit comes to the assembled disciples, He fills the whole house (Acts 2:1-2). This happens because they have all expected this event from God. They have looked forward to it, without being distracted by so many things in the world. If we come together in that spirit and look forward to the revela-

tion of His glory, we can experience it. Then, like Mary, with our worship we will fill the house with the fragrance of it (Jn 12:3).

### Isa 6:5-7 | Sinfulness and Forgiveness

*5 Then I said,  
 "Woe is me, for I am ruined!  
 Because I am a man of unclean lips,  
 And I live among a people of unclean lips;  
 For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."  
 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which  
 he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7 He touched my mouth [with it] and  
 said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and  
 your sin is forgiven."*

While matter moves as the glory of God is revealed, the hearts of God's people remain hard and motionless. But not Isaiah's heart. The vision causes him to fall down before the LORD. The LORD is "a consuming fire" (Isa 33:14; Heb 12:29). In this overwhelming light he sees himself as being just as doom worthy as the people.

He is going to realize that his fate does not depend on an earthly king (verse 1), but on the LORD, the heavenly King, the three times holy God. That is why, after the six woes over the people in the previous chapter, he pronounces a "woe" for the seventh time, this time over himself (verse 5).

It is the 'woe me' of a believer who learns to see himself in God's presence. It is not about certain sins, as with the people, but about his sinfulness. That is a deeper work. Peter also comes to the conviction of his sinfulness in the presence of the Lord (Lk 5:8). We also see it with Abraham who feels like this in God's presence when he intercedes for Sodom for the sake of Lot (Gen 18:27; cf. Job 42:6). We see the same with Ezekiel when he is called (Eze 1:28), with John on Patmos (Rev 1:17) and with Saul when he is on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:3-4) when they come face to face with the Lord Jesus in His glory.

In each of them their further service is characterized by this appearance and encounter. We do not get these visions, but have them in the Word. By reading the Word we will have the same experience. We will behold

the glory of the Lord with the eyes of our hearts and be changed into that image, just as they have been changed by it. We will be overwhelmed by the reading of God's Word in the same way as Isaiah and the others.

With the exclamation "woe is me" Isaiah makes himself one with the sinful people. He feels unclean in the presence of the LORD. He knows himself spiritually in the same unclean condition of leprosy as in which King Uzziah, mentioned in verse 1, ended up through pride (2Chr 26:19-21; Lev 13:45). By acknowledging the judgment that he is worth, Isaiah escapes the judgment that God must bring on the whole people. Self-judgment is always the way to personally escape the judgment with which God must strike the whole. For God is always ready to grant salvation. Isaiah now participates in the assurance of forgiveness. In this he is a type of the believing remnant in the future.

This is how it should always be with us. The more we understand the characteristics of Christ's atoning work and the glories of His Person, the more we will become aware of our sinfulness. The closer we are to the Lord, the greater the awareness of our unworthiness will be. Therefore, we will learn to identify ourselves with the condition in which our fellow-members of the body of Christ have come if they have become unfaithful and go a sinful way. We will learn to confess their sins as ours. Ezra and Daniel have learned and done this (Ezra 9:1-15; Dan 9:3-23; cf. Neh 9:16-37). Only in this way we can, like Isaiah here, be called and used by the Lord as a true blessing for others.

For a contrite heart there is immediate grace (cf. Isa 57:15). A seraph brings Isaiah into contact with what lies on the altar (verse 6). Because of what the altar represents – Christ, Who offers Himself to God, which gives God the opportunity to offer forgiveness (2Cor 5:20-21) – Isaiah is assured of the forgiveness of his sins (verse 7). Through the application of a coal from the altar of incense, he is made fit for his service. He can now go out, surrounded by the aroma of the altar of incense (cf. 2Cor 2:14-16).

In this section we find both a throne and an (incense) altar. This refers to the glory of the Lord Jesus as King and Priest. In Israel king and priest are always separated. When king Uzziah asserts himself to fulfill a priestly

task, he becomes leprous (2Chr 26:19). Only the Lord Jesus, like Melchizedek, can be both King and Priest.

### Isa 6:8-10 | Call and Command

*8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" 9 He said, "Go, and tell this people:*

*'Keep on listening, but do not perceive;  
Keep on looking, but do not understand.'*

*10 "Render the hearts of this people insensitive,  
Their ears dull,  
And their eyes dim,  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
Hear with their ears,  
Understand with their hearts,  
And return and be healed."*

Isaiah is now fit to bring his serious message. He hears "the voice of the Lord" (*Adonai*, verse 1) with the question of whom He will send (verse 8). The "Lord", Who is speaking here for the first time, is God the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25b-27). At the same time it is also the Lord Jesus, as we know from the already quoted text from John 12 (Jn 12:41). This explains why the first question says "I", singular, and the second question "Us", plural. The plural "Us" (cf. Gen 1:26) makes it clear that the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is speaking here.

The question is not so much a general consideration, nor is it addressed to several people, but is addressed to the heart of Isaiah personally. It is clear that the question has not been asked to the angels in heaven. If that were so, the whole heavenly host would have immediately come forward and exclaimed: 'Send me, send me!' However, the angels remain silent. No one but Isaiah has been made fit to answer this question. He is the vessel that is cleansed and therefore useful to the Master (2Tim 2:21).

Isaiah answers immediately. He has no questions or objections and says: "Here am I. Send me." None of "His angels ... who perform His word" (Psa 103:20) can be sent to sinful people for this service. Only a man whose

lips are unclean at first, but have now been cleansed, can be sent to a people whose lips are unclean. With the same goal, we too are on earth.

There is nothing that prevents the fellowship between Isaiah and the Lord. When everything that stands in the way of our fellowship with the Lord Jesus is removed, we can fulfill every task He commands us to do in His power. Then nothing that He asks of us will be too heavy for us. Here we see the order:

1. first being convinced of our own unworthiness in God's presence, then
2. cleansing and then
3. sent out in the service of God.

The command Isaiah receives is a very heavy one (verse 9). He has to go to "these people" and bring them the judgment of hardening. By calling the people "this people" – and not speaking of "My people" – the LORD takes distance from His people (verses 9-10; cf. Exo 32:9,21,31; Num 11:11-14).

The message of hardening that Isaiah is to bring (verse 10) will later also be brought to the people by the Lord Jesus (Mt 13:10-15). At the same time, this makes clear why this judgment of hardening must come on the mass of the people: because they reject the Lord Jesus. This rejection is clearly evident in attributing the work of the Spirit in Christ to "Beelzebul the ruler of demons", that is to satan himself (Mt 12:22-32).

Still later, this verse of Isaiah will also make clear that the people reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Paul (Acts 28:25-27). With this they will seal the judgment of hardening.

They have persisted so much in their sin of rejecting the LORD and are so stubborn in their refusal to return to Him, that the possibility of conversion and healing is now over. They will hear the preaching, but they will not understand its spiritual meaning. They will think that they see, they will even boast that they see, but their rejection of the Lord Jesus will be proof that they are blind and that their sin remains (Jn 9:39-41).

Whoever falls under the judgment of hardening is from that moment on no longer accessible to the Word of God. The heart has become of stone. It is indeed true that someone can no longer come to God if God no longer draws him (Jn 6:44). Then God has surrendered him to himself and his



lusts because he himself has chosen to do so (Rom 1:24,26,28). This is the judgment on Israel.

That judgment of hardening has not come over the whole of Israel, but over a part of it (Rom 11:25). That part is the mass. It is the unbelieving mass that is in the land. Since that time, evangelizing among orthodox Jews has been almost without result, because of this hardening. Jews do regularly come to repentance, there is always a remnant, even in this time (Rom 11:5), but these are exceptions. The mass is hardened.

At the beginning of Zionism, in the nineteenth century, there seemed to be a national revival among the Israelites. Many returned to the land. Some also came to repentance. There came faith in Jesus as the Messiah. On the basis of their own Scriptures it was and is explained that the Messiah had already come. But the vast majority of those who live in Israel don't like the Messiah Jesus at all and rely on their own strength and follow their own insights to face the problems.

#### **Isa 6:11-13 | Until ...**

*11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered,  
 "Until cities are devastated [and] without inhabitant,  
 Houses are without people  
 And the land is utterly desolate,  
 12 "The LORD has removed men far away,  
 And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.  
 13 "Yet there will be a tenth portion in it,  
 And it will again be [subject] to burning,  
 Like a terebinth or an oak  
 Whose stump remains when it is felled.  
 The holy seed is its stump."*

Although Isaiah is willing and wants to obey, he feels the weight of this announcement. His reaction also shows his mind. He is not going to bring this message with joy. He asks how long this blinding or hardening will last (verse 11; cf. Zec 1:12). In the question "Lord, how long?" we hear the confidence he has in the LORD that He will not reject His people forever (cf. Exo 32:9-14). In this we recognize the intercessor.

In the answer of the LORD we indeed hear of an “until”. But first the judgment must have its full effect (verses 11-12). This lasts until the land is destroyed and depopulated. What remains then, “one tenth”, which we recognize in the returnees from the Babylonian exile, is destroyed again (verse 13). This happened, for example, in the year 70 by the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem and massacred its inhabitants. Many fled to Iraq, which was outside the Roman Empire.

Later, too, many fled the land for all kinds of oppressors, including the islamic ones. The land has become more and more depopulated and also more and more devastated. The lowest point is around the year 1800. The number of Jews in the land at that time is estimated at only 5,000. But there has always been a remnant in the land, with which the globally scattered people have always been connected.

Then comes the era of Zionism, with a first wave of Russian Jews returning to the land at the end of the nineteenth century. That return continued. As a result, around 3,000,000 Jews from all five continents have returned to the land. Not only the inhabitants have been driven out over the centuries, but the land has also been destroyed for centuries.

In the end time, the time that is now coming, land and people will be destroyed again. When Israel goes through the great tribulation, there seems to be nothing left. But the remnant will blossom again. It will be “like a terebinth or an oak” from which all branches have been cut off and only a stump is left. However, there is life in the stump and therefore it will sprout.

This sprout will be “the holy seed”, a seed completely dedicated to the LORD. This refers to the remnant that the LORD has preserved for Himself. This corresponds to the name of the son of Isaiah, Shear-jashub, which means that a rest or a remnant will return, will convert. It is amazing that the LORD uses for the remnant the same word “holy” (*qodes*) as the Holy Spirit did for the LORD Himself in verse 3. Thus the connection between this remnant and the LORD is strongly expressed.

Above all, “the holy seed” refers to the Lord Jesus, Who will be born out of a remnant returned to Jerusalem (Isa 11:1). He is “the holy thing begot-

ten” as it is literally said to Mary (Lk 1:35). The “holy seed” Israel is holy through its union with the true holy seed, Christ.

## Isaiah 7

### Introduction

Here a new section begins. It is about the question of whether Israel satisfies as a servant of the LORD, with as touchstone whether there is faith. This chapter shows in Ahaz, the king and representative of Israel, a picture of a servant without faith. This prophetically refers to the antichrist in whom faith in the LORD is utterly lacking. Later we will see in Hezekiah, as the representative of the faithful remnant, the true faith (Isa 36:1-7,13-22; 37:1-20).

After the death of Uzziah (Isa 6:1), Jotham became king. During his reign, that is over a period of four years, Isaiah received no prophecy from the LORD, at least not one that had to be written down. Although King Jotham does what is right in the eyes of the LORD, the people continue to do evil (2Chr 27:2).

Then Ahaz, the wicked son of Jotham, comes to the government. This creates a new series of prophecies of the LORD in the section of Isaiah 7:1-9:6. The central subject is Immanuel, the Son of the virgin, of Whom we have the first direct prophecy in this chapter (verse 14).

The events in the coming chapters up to and including Isaiah 12 are more or less chronological.

### Isa 7:1-2 | Rezin and Pekah Against Jerusalem

*1 Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to [wage] war against it, but could not conquer it. 2 When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.*

What is described in verse 1 can be found in more detail in 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28 (2Kgs 16:5-20; 2Chr 28:5-27). There it is told how, because of the threat of the great empire of Assyria, the small kingdoms of Syria and

Ephraim, the ten tribes realm, form an alliance. Ahaz, king of Judah, does not want to participate in this alliance. That is why Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel attack Ahaz. They want to replace Ahaz with the son of Tabeal, of whom we can assume that he is a Syrian man (verse 6). Ahaz panics and seeks refuge with Assyria (2Kgs 16:7). When Rezin and Pekah attack him, Assyria comes to help him (2Kgs 16:9). In this way evil is averted and Ahaz seems to have succeeded in his intention.

Ahaz is the son of faithful Jotham and the grandson of faithful Uzziah (verse 1). Faith, however, is not a heritage. Ahaz is one of the most wicked kings of Judah. In God's discipline over him, the kings of Syria and Israel enter Judah together. They have won victories and inflicted a great stroke on Judah, but they have not been able to achieve a final victory. They did not succeed in conquering Jerusalem.

When "the house of David" – Ahaz is seen here as its representative – hears that an expedition is being prepared against them by the allies, Ahaz and the people become very frightened (verse 2). Whenever 'the house of David' is spoken of, the thought of the Messiah, the Son of David, is always connected to it. This is at the same time the reason why a message of the LORD follows.

The message about the imminent expedition causes a crisis in Judah. A crisis, also in our lives, is a test to see how it is responded to. Are we going to the Lord or are we resorting to a human being and human resources? Ahaz and the people, however afraid they may be, do not think of the LORD. The powerful message He has sent through His prophet Isaiah does not change that. In this history the prophecy of the LORD about unbelief in Israel (Isa 6:9-10) is fulfilled.

### Isa 7:3-9 | Isaiah Is Sent to Ahaz

*3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field, 4 and say to him, 'Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands, on account of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Aram, [with] Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil against you,*

saying, 6 *"Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,"* 7 thus says the Lord GOD: *"It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass.* 8 *For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin (now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered, [so that it] is no longer a people),* 9 *and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not believe, you surely shall not last."*

In view of the threat of war Isaiah receives the command of the LORD to meet Ahaz, together with his son Shear-jashub (verse 3). The son of Isaiah is present for a reason. This son has been given to him, together with another son, "for signs and wonders in Israel" (Isa 8:18). It does not say that the boy says or does anything. Only his name is mentioned.

That is exactly the reason why he is mentioned and present at the meeting, namely because of the meaning of his name. "Shear-jashub" means "the remnant will return", a name that indicates that God will always have a remnant according to the election of His grace (Rom 11:5). Here we see a continuation of the message from the previous chapter about "a stump", "the holy seed" that remains (Isa 6:13).

When Isaiah introduces his son to Ahaz and mentions his name, it should have a meaning for Ahaz. It should lead him to return to the LORD, that is, he should repent. It also includes the warning that if he refuses, he will not participate in the restoration of that part of the people which is referred to as 'remnant'.

The LORD designates Isaiah the place of meeting. It is a double indication: "The end of the conduit of the upper pool" and: "On the highway to the fuller's field" (cf. "the lower pool", Isa 22:9). There the LORD will make known His grace to Ahaz. He wants to encourage him and take away his fear. Ahaz will be present at the indicated place to see how he can secure the water supply, which is necessary in view of the upcoming siege of Jerusalem.

At exactly the same place the faith of Hezekiah is later put to the test (Isa 36:2). The Holy Spirit mentions this place extensively twice with the purpose that we as readers will compare these two Scriptures with each other.

The first Scripture (here) shows unbelief and the second (Isa 36:2) shows faith. The Lord expects faith from His own.

If it were only a geographical place, the place of encounter would be indicated sufficiently clearly with the first indication. But the Holy Spirit gives as a further indication “on the highway to the fuller’s field”. The “fuller’s field” is the field where the fuller washes and dries dirty clothes. Clothing that needs to be washed suggests that we condemn our sinful deeds, our sinful life practice and start living a cleansed life. Then we walk on the path of purity and holiness (cf. Isa 35:8; 1:18b; 4:4).

In the fuller we see a picture of the Lord Jesus. His garments are “radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them” (Mk 9:3). His clothes, His life’s practice does not need cleaning. He is in the process of cleansing us, His own, what we see in the washing of His disciples’ feet, so that they can have fellowship with Him and the Father (Jn 13:1-10).

In the picture Isaiah meets Ahaz in a place where purity and holiness are connected with God as the origin of blessing. He who stands by God’s blessing in faith will also want to live pure and holy. Faith also sees that purity and holiness are necessary to receive God’s blessing. He who does not care about God and His blessing is blind to these things and, like Ahaz, follows his own darkened mind.

In His patience and goodness the LORD shows His grace to Ahaz in spite of his iniquity. He proves His mercy to lead him to repentance. If he does not repent because of the hardness of an unrepentant heart, he will have to deal with the severity of God (Rom 2:4-5; 11:22). In His mercy the LORD promises him that the plan of the northern alliance will not succeed and that Ephraim will be shattered (verses 4-9).

Isaiah assures him on behalf of the LORD that he can remain calm (verse 4). There is no reason to panic. God has not sent these enemies, so they will not succeed in their purpose. What do these two enemies mean after all? They do pretend that they will consume Judah in “fierce anger”, but to the LORD they are nothing more than “two stubs of smoldering firebrands” from which the fire has vanished and which will soon turn to ashes. He knows their plans in detail (verses 5-6) and will thwart their counsel (verse 7). He communicates those plans to Ahaz, who probably knew nothing about them at all.

They will both only continue to rule over their original territory (verse 8). Their idea of expanding their territory – they want to add Judah under the son of Tabeal, a puppet king appointed by themselves – will come to nothing. Who Tabeal or the son of Tabeal is, is not known.

It is yet another foolish plan to place someone of one's own choosing on the throne promised by God to the Son of David. In addition, the word about Ephraim will soon be fulfilled, that is, "within ... 65 years," it will no longer exist as a people. This refers to the carrying away of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria in 722 BC.

In order to make the promise of the LORD his own, Ahaz must put his trust in God's promise (verse 9). Therefore he is warned that he will be excluded from the promised blessing if he persists in his unbelief. If he is not powerful in believing what Isaiah has spoken, he will not be powerful in his actions.

The text part "if you will not believe, you surely shall not last [or: not be established]" (verse 9b), is a key text in this section. It is another pun. It means: if Ahaz does not have a firm faith, he will not stand firm either. The words 'believe' and 'established' are related in Hebrew. In Hebrew it says: *im lo ta-aminu, ki lo te-amenu*. *Ta-aminu* and *te-amenu* are both derived from the Hebrew root *aman*. *Ta-aminu* means to believe and *te-amenu* means established. Literally it says: 'If (*im*) do not (*lo*) believe, then (*ki*) do not (*lo*) establish.' Freely translated this is: 'Without believing there is no stability.'

This warning serves as a positive reminder of the power of faith. Faith is encouraged and strengthened by difficulties. Faith faces things that are impossible for the natural mind. While faith rests on the promises of God, it trusts in Him to fulfill His counsel and that He accounts for the obstacles for His glorification.

### Isa 7:10-13 | Ahaz May Ask For a Sign

10 Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 11 "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make [it] deep as Sheol or high as heaven." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" 13 Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"



Verse 10 is a proof that the preceding verses are a speaking of the LORD. Isaiah does not speak *about* the LORD, but *on behalf of* the LORD, for the LORD is going to speak “again”. However, it does not only indicate the fact of speaking. These words also indicate that He is going to speak about more far-reaching and deeper things.

The LORD says to Ahaz that he may ask for any sign from Him (verse 11). He gives Ahaz as it were a blank cheque. In order to win the trust of Ahaz He does so as “the LORD your God”. A sign is something – an event, a prophecy or a miracle – given by the LORD as a pledge or confirmation of His word or message. It can be compared to the signature of a director under a letter written by the secretary. A sign is God’s signature under the message of His prophets.

Ahaz may ask for a sign “deep as Sheol”. Perhaps in veiled terms, this is a protest against his habit of resorting to consulting the dead. For example, a sign in the deep could be an earthquake. He may also ask for a sign “high as heaven”, for example a sign at the sun or the moon (cf. Isa 38:7-8). The choice is up to him.

His choice makes it clear that he is not a real child of Abraham, that he does not possess the faith of Abraham. Shrouded in a veil of piety, his answer is a testimony of willfulness (verse 12). It is a hypocritical answer because the LORD Himself offers that he may ask Him. How can such a thing be finished up with a remark that he does not want to test the LORD! Ahaz even dares to quote something from God’s Word as a cover for his unbelief (Deu 6:16). This is pious unbelief.

He just doesn’t *want* to ask for a sign because he relies on Assyria. Why would you ask the LORD when you have help from people? Surely you don’t hand yourself over to Him, do you? If he asks for a sign, it also means that the LORD comes too close to him. That thought is always frightening for someone who knowingly refuses to believe and who refuses to break with unbelief.

Isaiah blames him for his lack of trust (verse 13). He does not address the apostate Ahaz personally, but he speaks to the “house of David”. With this he addresses the royal line of privileges and honor with all further generations. On the one hand it indicates how much the royal line with a king like

Ahaz has deviated from what the LORD purposed and may expect from it. On the other hand, the sequel shows that that line will not end with the wicked, unbelieving Ahaz, but will continue to exist through a merciful intervention of the LORD.

By his refusal to take the LORD at His word, Ahaz tries the patience of men, of people like Isaiah, and others with him, who mourn the rebellious attitude of the king. Is he also trying the patience of God by an attitude of so much unbelief, as if it would be impossible for God to give a solution in His grace?

### **Isa 7:14-16 | The Sign of the Lord**

*14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. 15 He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows [enough] to refuse evil and choose good. 16 For before the boy will know [enough] to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.*

If Ahaz then in unbelief refuses to ask for a sign, the Lord (*Adonai*) Himself in His grace will give a sign (verse 14). This sign will be chosen by no one but He as the sovereign Lord Himself. It is a sign far beyond the unbelief that prevails in the days of Ahaz. It becomes a permanent sign. With this sign, which is Christ, the prophecies and promises made to “the house of David” will be fulfilled in the future. Ahaz and people of his kind will neither experience nor participate in the blessings and glories of its fulfillment.

In the book of Isaiah, the word “behold” with which the sign is introduced is usually the introduction to something related to future circumstances. It is a call to look into the distance, into the future. What will be seen there is then presented. What the eye of faith is focused on here, is on the virgin who will become pregnant.

Already in the beginning of the Bible, just after the fall into sin, God said that the Conqueror of satan will be born of a woman (Gen 3:15). But the announcement of this could only be fully revealed in the New Testament: “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law” (Gal 4:4).

The Hebrew word for “virgin” here is *almah* and not *betulah*. *Almah* is the young woman who is ready for marriage, she is sexually mature and has the desire to marry, but she is still unmarried (cf. Gen 24:43). *Betulah* is the more specific word for ‘virgin’, but without the thought of age or sexual maturity (cf. Joel 1:8). The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament from the third century BC, translates the Hebrew word *almah* with *parthenos*, a word that only can mean ‘virgin’. We see that in Matthew’s citation of this quotation of Isaiah from the Septuagint (Mt 1:23).

The various conditions associated with this prophecy make it clear that its only possible fulfillment is communicated in the Gospels. They make it clear that the birth of the Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy (Mt 1:22-23; Lk 1:31-35). After this sign has been fulfilled in the coming of Christ, the Jews have cunningly tried to obscure the virginal aspect of this word. To this day, they are followed by unbelieving Christians.

The Lord Himself will give as a wonder sign that an ordinary (unmarried) woman will become pregnant. But that is not a wonder, is it? It is an everyday event and therefore a sign of much lower quality than what Ahaz was allowed to ask. What is so special about this? The wonder is that a virgin will become pregnant without the intervention of a man and that the Child That will be born will be the Son of God (Isa 9:6; Psalms 2:7). It will happen because the virgin will be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35). This Child will reign as the true Son of David (Isa 11:1-5; Lk 1:31-33).

The sign is also associated with a name, “Immanuel”, which means “God with us”. That name means that God comes to us, that He visits us, that He comes among us to be with us and to help us (Lk 1:68,78; 7:16). That Name is a great indictment against Ahaz and his way of acting through which he says as it were: Assyria with us.

In the name Immanuel we see the sign “in the deep” (verse 11), for Immanuel – ‘God with us’, or more literally ‘with us is God’ – is God Who descends to become Man. And as Man He will descend even further into the depths of substitutionary judgment and death. In that Name we also see the sign “in the high” (verse 11), for Immanuel is none other than God (Isa 8:10). Christ, the sign, first “descended into the lower parts of the earth” and then “ascended far above all the heavens” (Eph 4:9-10).

The food He will eat consists of “curds and honey” (verse 15), in which we see the food of the promised land summarized (Exo 3:8). He will eat curds and honey “at the time He knows [enough] to refuse evil and choose good”.

Curds and honey are the only foods available when all arable farming has been destroyed by war. It is the food of the poor remnant. We see in it a reference to the circumstances of the birth and youth of Christ. There is no prosperity in the house of Nazareth where He grows up. He has become poor (2Cor 8:9). Israel became poor because of their unbelief, but Christ became poor because He identified Himself with the people.

Christ, as a Baby, depends on the care of His parents, until the time when He is able to choose for Himself. It shows that He is truly and utterly Human, with the exception of sin (Heb 4:15). As a Man, He increases “in wisdom and stature” (Lk 2:52), which of course can never be said of Him as the true, eternal God. As Man He has gone through the development of every human being.

Before the boy, Shear-jashub, the son of Isaiah, refuses evil and chooses good, the countries of Syria and Israel, the ten tribes realm, will also have fallen into poverty (verse 16). The age at which a child knows the difference between good and evil, in other words, that conscience is going to work, can roughly be put at around two years of age. That is the length of time during which the two kings of whom Ahaz is still so afraid will forsake the land.

### **Isa 7:17-20 | Prediction of the Assyrian Invasion**

*17 The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria.” 18 In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is in the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. 19 They will all come and settle on the steep ravines, on the ledges of the cliffs, on all the thorn bushes and on all the watering places. 20 In that day the Lord will shave with a razor, hired from regions beyond the Euphrates ([that is], with the king of Assyria), the head and the hair of the legs; and it will also remove the beard.*

Isaiah has a good message and a bad message for Ahaz. The good message is that Israel and Syria will be defeated soon (verse 16). This will happen through Assyria (2Kgs 16:9). Ahaz will have listened to that message with pleasure. But then the tone changes and he also hears bad news and that is that Assyria, on whom Judah put his trust, will also invade Judah afterward (verse 17). Here too Isaiah connects the events of his time with those of the end time.

Here, for the first time Isaiah mentions Assyria, the enemy that will play such a significant role in the history of Israel. Within a few years Assyria will defeat Israel, the ten tribes realm. Then Isaiah speaks about Assyria also attacking Judah. What happens then overshadows everything that has already happened to Judah since the tearing of the realm in a northern ten tribes realm and a southern two tribes realm. By Ephraim is meant the northern ten tribes realm that has been separated from Judah since the days of the break-up under Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Assyria will also invade Judah after the carrying away of the ten tribes. That will be in the days of Hezekiah. Although a restoration will be given in those days, it will only be of a temporary nature.

The Egyptians, “the fly”, and the Assyrians, “the bee”, have often fought their battle for world domination in the territory of Judah. These two superpowers, to whom Judah goes alternately for help, will destroy the land and thus fulfill verses 18-19. In order to create heaven and earth, God only had to speak. To gather together the instruments of His judgment He only has to “whistle” (verse 18).

“Fly” and “bee” are insects that penetrate every nook and cranny and cause irritation and pain to people. Flies bring dirt and destruction. Bees are aggressive and chase and surround fugitives (Psa 118:12a). The inhabitants of Judah will try to escape from the enemy forces. To do so, they will hide in all sorts of places that are difficult to access (verse 19). But no place is safe, because wherever they are, the enemies will find them.

The details of verses 18-19 have been only partially fulfilled in the past. Only in the end time will they be fully fulfilled. It is remarkable that in verse 18 first ‘the fly of Egypt’ and only then ‘the bee of Assyria’ is called. Daniel 11 makes that clear. We read there that first the king of the South

(Dan 11:40) takes the initiative to attack Israel and only then the king of the North.

They will both attack Israel. So far, the state of Israel has won every war, such as the liberation war in 1948, the six-day war in 1967, the Yom Kippur war in 1973. But they will lose this war, with all its disastrous consequences. In this war, the king of the North will be stronger and more dangerous than the king of the South, just as bees are more dangerous than flies. If Israel is destroyed, the king of the North will go on and go to destroy the king of the South (Dan 11:42).

The king of Assyria is called “a razor” which was “hired” by “the Lord” (*Adonai*) (verse 20). Ahaz has decided to hire Assyria to help him avert the imminent danger of Syria and Ephraim. The LORD will hire the same Assyria – there is a certain sarcasm in the use of the same words – to shave Judah with it.

Shaving off the “head” is a humiliation of the position of the people; shaving off “the hair of the legs” points to a great libel; “remove the beard” means inflicting a great humiliation on the masculinity. We can apply this in such a way that from Judah the royal authority (hair of the head), the national dignity (hair of the legs) and the masculine strength (the beard) will be taken away.

If a Nazirite has defiled himself in his dedication to the LORD, he must shave off his hair (Num 6:9). Israel had to be dedicated to the LORD, but defiled itself. The leper must also get rid of all hair (Lev 14:9). In the same way, Israel has defiled itself and has become leprous. The same applies to the Levite, the servant of the priest (Num 8:7). Israel is also no longer able to serve the LORD.

### **Isa 7:21-25 | Consequences of the Assyrian Invasion**

*21 Now in that day a man may keep alive a heifer and a pair of sheep; 22 and because of the abundance of the milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone that is left within the land will eat curds and honey. 23 And it will come about in that day, that every place where there used to be a thousand vines, [valued] at a thousand [shekels] of silver, will become briars and thorns. 24 [People] will come there with bows and arrows because all the land will be briars and thorns.*

*25 As for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample.*

These verses describe the consequences of Assyria's invasion, the condition that will come after Assyria has raged in Judah. This description will be fully fulfilled in the future when the king of the North will invade Israel (Dan 11:40-44). Of the abundance of the land, only a miserable rest remains, no large flocks, only a heifer and a pair of sheep (verse 21).

However, the remaining population is so small that the few cattle will give enough milk (verse 22). A heifer gives about five liters of milk a day, small cattle give one liter of milk a day. From the remaining milk even curds can be made. There is also enough honey in the wild, because instead of a land of agriculture, the land will be a wilderness.

The food mentioned here is also the food of the Messiah (verse 15). Here the deep meaning of it becomes clear. Here it appears that the Messiah identifies Himself with the poor and small remnant. Especially in the Gospel according to Luke we see how the Lord Jesus identifies Himself with the poor, like the poor Joseph and Mary and the poor shepherds in the field.

Where vineyards were abundant, now only briars and thorns grow (verse 23). Here happens what Isaiah announced (Isa 5:6). Not only in vineyards grow briars and thorns. All the land is full of briars and thorns. Anyone who thinks that the land yields something, is ashamed. It is best to enter the land with bows and arrows, because then one can chase away the wild beasts that will be present in the resulting wilderness.

When a company of God's people leaves the straight way of the Lord, fruitless and pernicious products of the human spirit will develop. This will result in spiritual dryness and painful experiences instead of fertility that glorifies God (Jn 15:8).

## Isaiah 8

### **Isa 8:1-4 | Swift Is the Booty, Speedy Is the Prey**

*1 Then the LORD said to me, "Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters: Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey [Hebrew: Maher-shalal-hash-baz]. 2 And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah." 3 So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; 4 for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."*

The events in this chapter are closely related to those of the previous chapter. It is also about the deliverance of Judah from the threat of the Syrian-Israeli alliance and the subsequent Assyrian invasion that will finally also reach Judah. In view of this, Isaiah is given the task to write down a message and to do so in such a way that everyone can take note of it as he passes by (verse 1; cf. Hab 2:2). It must be easy to read. God's warnings are always perceptible and understandable to everyone. The LORD tells him what he should write down: "Maher-shalal-hash-baz", which means 'swift is the booty, speedy is the prey'.

Isaiah also has to take two for the people "faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah ... and Zechariah" (verse 2; cf. Deu 19:15). Uriah means 'the LORD is my light' and Zechariah 'the LORD remembers'. The meaning of their names contains a hopeful message in the midst of spiritual darkness. The names testify that the LORD gives light on the path of the believer and that He never forgets His people.

We know of Uriah that he is an ungodly priest (2Kgs 16:10-16). He will therefore not be a faithful witness because of his personal credibility, but because of his ministry. Who Zechariah was is not known. With the people both witnesses will have had authority. Their testimony at the appointed time about what Isaiah preached will be a confirmation of what he wrote on the large tablet.



The LORD has the *written* message of Isaiah confirmed by a *living* message in the person of a son whom He promises to give him. He also tells him how the name of his son should be. To give him that son the LORD uses the natural relationship between Isaiah and his wife in sexual intercourse (verse 3). The LORD blesses the intercourse with pregnancy and the birth of a son. When the child is born, He tells Isaiah to name his son “Maher-shalal-hash-baz”.

Isaiah’s wife is here called “the prophetess”. This means that she herself is a prophetess in the sense that she receives messages from God to pass on, like Hulda and Deborah. Isaiah and his wife are a beautiful couple who in unity in the midst of an apostate people pass on the words of God.

The LORD also tells Isaiah why he should give that name to his son. It has to do with the plans of Syria and Israel to invade Judah. Isaiah has already written about this on a tablet (verse 1). Now it is said that it will not take long. The LORD says that He will give a solution and will do so soon. Before the child can say his first words, ‘daddy’ and ‘mommy’, the king of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser, will have conquered the capitals of Syria and Israel, which are Damascus and Samaria (verse 4). This means that this will happen shortly after the birth of this second child of Isaiah.

### Isa 8:5-8 | Assyria Invades Judah

5 *Again the LORD spoke to me further, saying,*  
 6 *“Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah*  
*And rejoice in Rezin and the son of Remaliah;*  
 7 *“Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them*  
*the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates,*  
*[Even] the king of Assyria and all his glory;*  
*And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks.*  
 8 *“Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through,*  
*It will reach even to the neck;*  
*And the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.*

What is written in verses 1-4 is good news for Ahaz. There will soon be booty and prey for him from the enemies he is so afraid of. But the LORD continues to speak with a new and also surprising message (verse 5). For

the prophecy has another aspect, in which there is no immediate encouragement for Ahaz. He is told that the success of the king of Assyria will be the stepping stone to attack Judah.

The king of Assyria will do so, because “these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah” (verse 6). Shiloah is a stream that flows from the source Gihon of Mount Zion and supplies Jerusalem with water. The stream ends at the pool Siloam.

Isaiah uses symbolic language that contains a spiritual message. The people have rejected what God has sent to them in goodness and grace of refreshment – “Shiloah” means “Sent” (Jn 9:7). That refreshment is sent in the promises of God of the throne and offspring of David. Instead of counting on those promises, they have placed their hopes in earthly powers. After all, Israel relies on Syria, while Judah relies on Assyria.

Above all ‘Shiloah’ refers to the Son sent by the Father. How softly goodness and grace have flowed through Him into this world. Where this stream came, he brought life and healing. Yet this ‘gently flowing’ river of life and blessing was rejected. The cross is proof of this. Now the waters of Shiloah flow in the Scriptures and can be drunk by anyone who is thirsty (Jn 7:37-38). Sadly, these “waters of Shiloah”, the gospel of the grace of God, are also now despised and rejected.

Israel, with the son of Remaliah at its head, entered into an alliance with Rezin, the king of Syria (Isa 7:1). They both rejoice in this. But they will not laugh for long. Judah trusts in the support of Assyria. By the way, it can also be translated that ‘there is joy *about* Rezin’ and so on. The meaning is then that Judah rejoices at the failure, announced by Isaiah, of the plan the allies plotted to conquer Judah. In any case it is a misplaced joy.

Both Judah and Israel with Syria will be overwhelmed by the king of Assyria through the hands of “the Lord” (*Adonai*), the sovereign Ruler (verse 7; Isa 7:16-17). The king of Assyria is compared to “strong and abundant waters” that “will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks”, which accentuates the contrast with the “gently flowing waters of Shiloah” mentioned in the previous verse. Now that they have despised the gently flowing waters of life and refreshment, they will come to know the devastating waters of death and destruction.

Yet there will be a difference between the overflowing of Israel and that of Judah. Judah will be “overflowed” for the most part, but not in its entirety. It is “even to the neck” (verse 8). Isaiah sees it happening before his mind’s eye. He feels the tightness when the water comes to the neck. For him, the arrival of Assyria in the land is also like the arrival of a huge bird of prey spreading its wings over the land to make it its prey. Overwhelmed by distress, he suddenly turns to the LORD in his great distress and exclaims that it is “your land, O Immanuel”.

It is first and foremost “your land”, which is the land of the LORD. Immanuel is the LORD Himself. He is the reason why Jerusalem will be spared and that the city will be redeemed in the future. The exclamation of Isaiah is the call for the Messiah, for He alone can give a solution. He is Immanuel, God with us.

### Isa 8:9-10 | God Thwarts the Plans of the Peoples

*9 “Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered;  
And give ear, all remote places of the earth.  
Gird yourselves, yet be shattered;  
Gird yourselves, yet be shattered.  
10 “Devise a plan, but it will be thwarted;  
State a proposal, but it will not stand,  
For God is with us.”*

When Isaiah – as a type of the faithful remnant – has his eye on the glory of Immanuel, he sees how things will go in the distant future. In the light of Immanuel, he sees the fate of all enemies of Israel as sealed. He mentions the raging or association of the peoples (verse 9, Darby Translation; Psa 2:1-5). In one breath he mentions the outcome. They gird themselves to fight, they associate themselves, but immediately thereafter they are shattered. Isaiah says as it were: ‘Associate yourselves, you will be shattered anyway.’

All their plans will come to nothing (verse 10). The words of their propaganda have no effect. What is the cause of this? That God is with His people. The secret of the failure of all the peoples’ evil plans to destroy God’s people lies in the great name Immanuel, God with us. That Name means

the judgment on all peoples that have been gone up against God's people, resulting in the complete deliverance of Israel in the last days. Which way the remnant should follow until that moment has come, is mentioned from verse 11 onward.

### **Isa 8:11-12 | Do Not Walk in the Way of This People**

*11 For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,  
12 "You are not to say, '[It is] a conspiracy!' In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy,  
And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of [it].*

These verses continue to denounce "the way of this people," that is, the way of relying on Assyria rather than on God. The LORD has forcefully – literally: with strength of the hand – made it clear to Isaiah that he should not go in "the way of this people" (verse 11). A prophet does not follow the way of the majority. The expression that the hand of the LORD is upon the prophet indicates that the LORD impels the prophet to service and gives him the power to do so (cf. 1Kgs 18:46; 2Kgs 3:15; Eze 1:3; 3:14; Jer 15:17). Perhaps Isaiah needed Divine insistence for his service because the people always reject his words and thereby he might become despondent.

It seems that Isaiah has been inclined to go along with the thinking of Ahaz and Judah who seek their strength in an alliance, here translated as "conspiracy", with Assyria (verse 12). The heart of the prophet is by nature no better than the heart of the people. He is not allowed to change or even stop his message. In the future, the remnant will also have to distance themselves from the conspiracy of the antichrist who connects Israel with the beast of the restored Western Roman Empire or Europe.

Those who constantly pay attention to the fact that 'God is with us' are not afraid of the things that people who do not have a living faith in 'Immanuel' are afraid of. God encourages everyone to trust in Him and not to put their trust in the power of human covenants.

### **Isa 8:13-15 | A Sanctuary and a Stone to Strike**

*13 "It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy.*

*And He shall be your fear,  
And He shall be your dread.*

*14 "Then He shall become a sanctuary;  
But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,  
[And] a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

*15 "Many will stumble over them,  
Then they will fall and be broken;  
They will even be snared and caught."*

The LORD points out to Isaiah that instead of being afraid of people and of things that people are afraid of (verse 12), he should only have "the LORD of hosts" before his attention (verse 13). The LORD of hosts is He Who possesses all the heavenly and also earthly powers, the good and also the evil. He is in control of everything.

To "regard" Him "as holy" means to live in the constant awareness that He has absolute authority and control over the heart and the will, so that they are completely separated for Him. Then we will not have to be afraid of anything or anyone. Whatever someone is planning or saying (verse 10), he will not be able to do anything against us if we regard Him as holy.

Living in the fear of God means that every activity of life, the whole walk, contains nothing that is not pleasing to Him. It is the opposite of fearing people in general and not only the kings of the world. That He must be our "fear" and "dread" does not mean that we flee from Him, but that our attitude is one of reverence and awe.

It is about knowing ourselves in His presence and not in the presence of people. It is about a holy fear of God opposite an unholy fear of men. This is the only and fitting answer to the redeeming grace and love of Christ (1Pet 3:14b-15a; Isa 29:23; cf. Num 20:12). Peter's reference to this verse in Isaiah shows that Christ, or the Messiah, is the same as "the LORD of hosts".

The consequence of regarding the LORD as holy is that He will be "a sanctuary" for the remnant (verse 14). "Sanctuary" here has the meaning of a refuge (cf. Eze 11:16). Just as the temple to Israel is meant to be the center of their spiritual life, of their joy in worship and praise, as a place of holiness and peace, and also of protection, so is Christ for the believer. Christ not

only has a holy place in our hearts, but He Himself is a holy place where we can take shelter.

But to the unbelievers of all Israel He will be “a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over” (verse 15; Rom 9:32b-33; 1Pet 2:7-8). In Romans 9:33, Paul, like Peter, applies what is said here of the LORD to the Lord Jesus. Faith in Christ is the dividing line that runs right through His people. “Both the houses of Israel” – the ten tribes realm of Ephraim and the two tribes realm of Judah – and “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” will reject Him. Not only the two tribes will reject Him, but also the ten tribes. In the course of time quite a few of them have come to live in Judah (2Chr 15:9; 30:11; cf. Lk 2:36-38).

All twelve tribes will therefore reject Him because He does not meet what a Messiah should be in their eyes. They stumble over Him because of their unbelief. By their rejection of Him, many will “fall and be broken”. Those who do not fall and become broken will “be snared and caught”. A first fulfillment of this happens in the year 70 at the destruction of Jerusalem. At the time of the great tribulation, the majority of Israel will stumble, fall and be caught in the snare of the antichrist.

### **Isa 8:16-18 | Isaiah and His Children**

*16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. 17 And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him. 18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.*

Because of their rejection of the Messiah, the judgment of blindness takes place. They will be blind and deaf to the words of God. All the study of the *Torah*, which points to the Lord Jesus in all its parts, by orthodox Jews does not bring them anything (Jn 5:39,46-47). They discover nothing of the Messiah. Their eyes are closed (2Cor 3:14). It is the judgment of hardening that for a part, that is the mass, has come over Israel (Rom 11:25). Therefore they will accept the antichrist (Jn 5:43b).

By “the testimony” (verse 16) is meant what Isaiah said about Immanuel and the future condition of Israel. It is the prophetic testimony. It must be secured and preserved for the remnant in those days and also for the rem-

nant in later generations. That is what is meant by “bind up”. With “the law”, that is the law of Moses rejected by the people (Isa 5:24), the same must be done, which is indicated by the command “seal”. Only the faithful remnant, “my disciples”, those who open themselves to be taught by the LORD through the mouth of Isaiah, and later the followers of the Messiah, will be encouraged by it.

This also applies to us. After Paul has foretold the elders of Ephesus the coming apostasy, he commends them, and us, to God and the Word of His grace (Acts 20:32). For all those who want to be faithful in a time of apostasy, the Word of God is full of encouragement. As times get darker, the Word of God will become increasingly valuable to the pupil-disciple.

In the midst of the people from whom the LORD has hidden His face because of their sins, Isaiah is determined to persevere and wait for Him (verse 17). Waiting for the LORD is, just like praying, an acknowledgment of one’s own powerlessness and being completely dependent on Him. When the LORD “is hiding His face”, it means that he withholds the blessing from His people. Man then cannot see Him. God is there, but man does not perceive that blessing.

Every true believer, just like Isaiah, will, despite the lack of blessing, trust in God and look forward to His salvation. In times of need due to the sins of God’s people, when God does not openly connect with His people, the individual believer knows that God’s heart goes out to him. He knows this because he draws from the enduring Word of God. This testimony of God’s Word remains sealed for the mass of the people who persist in their sins; it remains illegible and misunderstood.

The last part of verse 17, “I will even look eagerly for Him”, is quoted in Hebrews 2. It is rendered there with “I will put My trust in Him” (Heb 2:13a). The Speaker there is Christ, the Messiah. The quote proves that Christ is truly Man. That proof is seen in the trust He as Man places in His God.

Herein is a valuable lesson. We too live in a state of decay and refusal to listen to God’s Word. If we remain faithful and remain standing in God’s purposes, we will focus our hearts all the more steadfastly on Him in this state. Also our expectation will be from Him. It can depress us when we

see the decline of those who once gave hope for fruit through our service. Then the Spirit of God wants to bring us closer to the Lord, so that we will find our sources in the power He has to still glorify His Name through us. The prophet finds comfort in the two children the LORD has given him (verse 18). In the meaning of the name of his first son, Shear-jashub (Isa 7:3), we hear a word of grace. He is the sign that 'a remnant will return'. This will happen in the future. In the meaning of the name of his second son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz (verse 3), we hear a word of judgment. He is the sign that there will be 'swift booty, speedy prey'. That judgment will be carried out quick and soon.

The two children are "signs and wonders" of the redemption of Israel. "Signs" means that their names have a deeper meaning that includes a message from God for the people. We have had that meaning several times before. "Wonders" are the indication of the Divine, supernatural source of this message. The redemption of Israel will happen through judgment on the enemies. Those enemies are there on two sides. Internally it is the wicked mass of the people and externally it are the hostile surrounding peoples.

The prophet Isaiah, together with the children whom God has given him, is also a type, a symbol of Christ together with the children whom God has given Him (cf. Jn 17:2,6,24). We see this in the quotation of the first part of verse 18 in Hebrews 2 (Isa 8:18a; Heb 2:13b). As Man Christ has connected Himself with the children whom God has given Him, that is the remnant of Israel. The Spirit of God applies verse 18a in Hebrews 2 to the spiritual children of God at this time (Heb 2:13b). They are in connection with Christ.

They are not 'children of Christ' or 'children of the Lord Jesus'. The Bible does not use such expressions for believers anywhere. They are incorrect expressions. They are the children of God whom He, God, gave to the Lord Jesus. The natural children of Isaiah are the symbolic representatives of the believers who must be a witness to the world in the same way.

### Isa 8:19-22 | Consulting Demons

19 When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? [Should they consult]



*the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. 21 They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. 22 Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and [they will be] driven away into darkness.*

He who does not listen to God's words turns to the powers of darkness. The difference between them is like the difference between the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and the wild waters of Assyria (verses 6-7). One brings blessing, the other destruction. Now that the LORD hides His face from the house of Jacob, the people seek salvation with spiritistic mediums (verse 19). Spiritism has penetrated into Judah (Isa 2:6; 3:2-3). These mediums try to influence the family and disciples of Isaiah. Thus, believers today also undergo attempts by evil spirits to influence them.

Here we see that "the living" consult "the dead" although the law and the testimony are with them in which the light of God shines. This practice is strongly condemned by God in His Word (Lev 20:27; Deu 18:9-12). Those who do not believe in the Word of God seek counsel and help from other sources (1Sam 28:6-8). The LORD reproaches the people for this way of acting by asking two questions, the answer to which is contained in the question. Instead of consulting the living God, the dead idols are consulted, behind which there are demons (1Cor 10:19-20).

Around every major crisis in human affairs often an eruption of spiritism takes place. This is the case in Judah and Israel. This is the case in the time of Christ's coming to earth. It is the same today, just before Christ's return. In times of need, man massively prefers to resort to divination rather than to God. People see the uncertainty of the future and want information about it. Instead of turning to the God of truth one turns to the father of lies. But God has provided in the holy Scriptures everything necessary for our guidance and all our spiritual needs (2Tim 3:16-17).

The people are reminded of the Word (verse 20). The teaching of the law answers the questions of life and leads to a life in the light (Isa 2:5). He who ignores this will end up in eternal darkness. For such a person there is no

future, “no dawn”. The way to that awful future is horrible and becomes more and more terrifying (verse 21). There is a lack of everything that is necessary to live. There is also total darkness inwardly. Blame is placed on anyone who, in their eyes, has the power to change their misery.

In the future, when the king of the North invades (Dan 11:40-44), the antichrist, who will be king of Israel, will not be able to do anything. The people will then realize that their king is in fact a worthless shepherd who abandons the sheep (Zec 11:17) and will then curse their king. This will be partly justified because the king of the North invaded the land because of him. But instead of repenting and acknowledging their guilt, they will blame God for all this, as many do today. Instead of blaming themselves, they will harden their hearts and curse God.

They will be driven away (verse 22). This concerns the nation. They will be expelled from the land of Immanuel and carried away to a strange and dark land. There they will be deprived of all light in which they refused to walk when they had it at their disposal. They have chosen the darkness and they are now receiving it in abundance. On the outside and on the inside, above and below, there is darkness and fear everywhere.

## Isaiah 9

### **Isa 9:1 | Darkness Will Not Remain**

*1 But there will be no [more] gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make [it] glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.*

The deep darkness of the previous verses does not have the last word. The “but” with which verse 1 begins introduces a new section that contrasts with the previous section. In the previous verses it is about darkness that will come as judgment on the people, while here God provides a light that He will send in the coming of the Messiah in the darkness for those who will accept Him. He is the light that shines in the darkness (Jn 1:5a).

He has especially “the land of Zebulun” and “the land of Naphtali” in mind. The LORD has brought “contempt” over that area. We can think of the time when Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee for his help, cities which Hiram despicably called “the land of Cabul”, meaning: the land of nothing (1Kgs 9:11-15). He cannot appreciate that gift. Furthermore, we see that after the tearing of the realm, the judgment of the LORD came in various stages on the ten tribes through Assyria (2Kgs 15:29; 17:1-8,22-23). These two tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, were first conquered by the Assyrians.

Instead of the defamation of the past, “in earlier times” (cf. Jn 1:46-47; 4:9), later on the LORD “shall make [it] glorious”. This will happen through the coming of the Messiah. Precisely in this area, where darkness is at its deepest, God will let His light shine in the coming of Christ. So it is not in Jerusalem, the capital, but in the despised Galilee.

The Christ will be born in Bethlehem in Judah, but shortly after His birth He will live and grow up in Nazareth in Zebulun (Mt 2:22-23). Later He lives in Capernaum (Mt 4:13; 9:1a) which is in Naphtali. There He begins His service (Mk 1:21). Here the prophet moves again from the darkness of the actual situation where the invasion is imminent to the days of the

shining light in the coming of Christ in the flesh in the midst of the people, especially in Zebulon and Naphtali.

This area is further described with three names:

1. "The way of the sea" (the Via Maris), which is the trade route between Syria and Egypt through Galilee along the Mediterranean Sea. This indicates that many heathens passed through Galilee.
2. "The other side of Jordan", which is east of Jordan.
3. "Galilee of the Gentiles", which indicates that the region is strongly under heathen influence and that there has also been mixing of God's people with the heathen.

Everything speaks of contempt. But what is not regarded among God's people and is in darkness for God, is not despised by Him, but visited in His grace in His Son. He did not despise the Gentiles either.

Prophetically this verse points to the deep darkness in which the faithful remnant will be, first by the government of the antichrist and then by the invasion of Assyria, or the king of the North (Dan 11:40-41). If in the future the unbelieving part of Israel is exterminated by the Assyrians – "two parts" of three parts (Zec 13:8) – and the darkness and distress are greatest, there is the promise: "But" the LORD "shall make" this northern part of Israel "glorious" through the appearance of Christ. Then He will grant salvation, partly through the destruction of the army of the king of the North. This will be explained in detail in the next verses.

### **Isa 9:2-7 | The Appearance of the Messiah**

*2 The people who walk in darkness  
Will see a great light;  
Those who live in a dark land,  
The light will shine on them.*  
*3 You shall multiply the nation,  
You shall increase their gladness;  
They will be glad in Your presence  
As with the gladness of harvest,  
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.*

*4 For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,  
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.*

*5 For every boot of the booted warrior in the [battle] tumult,  
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.*

*6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;  
And the government will rest on His shoulders;  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*

*7 There will be no end to the increase of [His] government or of peace,  
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness  
From then on and forevermore.*

*The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.*

Here we come to the climax of the section that begins in Isaiah 7:1. Instead of the short-sighted unbelief of King Ahaz, who plunges his people into deep darkness, we find the King Messiah, Who, though a Child, is the promised Immanuel. He will end all strife and misery and introduce an everlasting kingdom based on law and righteousness.

The first fulfillment of verse 1 and verse 2 can be seen in Matthew 4. The evangelist cites these verses of Isaiah to describe the work of the Lord Jesus in Galilee (Mt 4:12-16). He is "a great light" offering salvation to people who are "in darkness". He is the great light, the sun of the fourth day of creation (Gen 1:16), Who illuminates everything (Mal 4:2). He shines like the light for people who live in a land over which "the shadow of death" hangs and brings light and life there (Jn 1:4).

The full fulfillment of these verses will take place at the end of the anger of the LORD (Isa 10:5). When the king of the North is back in the land after defeating the king of the South, the judgment will be executed, not in Judea, but in Galilee. Also at the first coming of Christ, His service is mainly in Galilee in the north. The army of the restored Western Roman Empire (Europe) and the army of the king of the North will both be destroyed at the appearance of the Lord Jesus.

From the moment the people see the great light, the prophet in verses 3-7 goes to an event even further into the future. He speaks in those verses

about the breaking of the power of the antichrist and the establishment of the realm of peace and justice of the Messiah. We see

1. a great light (verse 2) instead of darkness (verse 1),
2. increasing gladness (verse 3) instead of distress (Isa 8:21),
3. deliverance (verse 4) instead of slavery, and
4. peace (verse 7) instead of war (verse 5).

Verse 3 has not yet been fully fulfilled. Only a remnant has returned from exile and not a “multiplied” nation. Among the successive heathen rulers there has never been a situation of the joy described in this verse. When in the future the Lord Jesus comes at the end of the great tribulation to personally deliver His earthly people, there will be immense joy with the remnant.

They have had an extremely tough time. During the great tribulation they will go through a heavy persecution caused by the antichrist, who will be king of Israel, with the help of the beast of the sea, the restored Roman Empire (Rev 13:1-10). Because of the great tribulation, the remnant will be scattered all over the land (Mt 24:21-22), over the mountains and in the farthest corners of the land. But when the king of the North overruns the land of Israel, it is these faithful Israelites who will survive the massacre – just like the Christians who fled in the year 70 at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Rev 12:16-17).

The people will become numerous with the return of the remnant of both the two and the ten tribes. The joy that will then be there will be compared to the joy there is when the harvest is brought in and when booty is distributed. The first joy is that of the blessing of the land, the second is that of the defeated enemies.

The joy in the presence of the Lord can already be experienced by us now. It should always be like this. This is not an expression of a natural joy over earthly prosperity, but a joy in Him that He is always with us.

Verse 4 gives the reason for the joy in the previous verse. It is the joy of salvation from the LORD. This verse is in the perfect tense, the so-called prophetic perfectum, the prophetically perfect tense. This means that the

event has yet to take place, but it is described as if it had already taken place.

“The yoke”, “the staff” and “the rod”, the symbols of the powers that have oppressed Israel, are all broken. The people have been delivered from them. All disciplinary instruments, the yoke of the antichrist on the faithful remnant and the staff and the rod of the surrounding hostile peoples on Israel – the king of the North – have been broken.

The “battle of Midian” recalls Gideon’s victory over Midian (Jdg 7:19-25). Then the LORD redeemed His people, not by the military strength of that people on whom they trusts so much today, but by His own choice of a small company. Therefore, they could not attribute the victory to their own strength (Jdg 7:2). In this way, the Lord Jesus will also appear in the future and personally stand up for His people and be assisted in this by a small remnant that is in the greatest weakness, but becomes strong through their connection with Him.

This also applies to us. If we want to fight the enemy in our own strength, it only plays into the hands of the enemy. But if we are weak, then we are strong (2Cor 12:10; cf. 2Chr 28:21), because then He is our strength. We “can do all things through Him who strengthens us” (Phil 4:13).

In the description of verse 5 we find again the prophetic Assyrians, who go up for the great battle against Israel. The ground is pounding with the pounding of the boots of the soldiers of the advancing armies (Joel 3:9-14). The cloak of the soldiers drips with the blood of the victims that will flow abundantly in this last battle (Isa 63:3; Rev 14:20). The end of all this violence is described briefly and powerfully. It will be burned as “fuel for the fire”. The judgment of the LORD will consume all opposition (Isa 66:15-16).

The third “for” (verse 6) indicates the reason for the salvation (verses 4-5) and the joy (verse 3). There is joy because God gives salvation, but how does He do that? It all begins with the birth of the King Messiah, the Christ, and ends with His everlasting reign.

In verse 6 both the first and the second coming of Christ are mentioned in one verse. That there is a first and a second coming is due to the rejection of the Messiah. If He had not been rejected, the kingdom would have been

established by Him immediately at His first coming. His rejection makes a second coming necessary.

The time in between has been *foreseen* by God, but not *foretold* by Him in the Old Testament. The church is not part of the prophecy, because it is a mystery for the prophets (Eph 3:5). In the prophecy the first and the second coming are always directly connected, without mentioning or referring to the time in between in which we now live, the time of the coming into being and the formation of the church.

In verses 6-7 we have one of the richest descriptions of Christ in the Old Testament. The hope of Israel begins with “a child” in a manger. The mention of His birth is an elaboration on the meaning of “Immanuel” (Isa 7:14). In Isaiah 7:14 is spoken about Him as a *sign*. Here He is a *gift*. He is born as a “child”, that means that He partook of flesh and blood (Heb 2:14). He is real and perfect Man, He is “[the] man Christ Jesus” (1Tim 2:5).

The “us” among whom this Child is born are those who have looked forward to Him, among whom Isaiah also counts himself. We see them at the beginning of the Gospel according to Luke in Joseph and Mary, Zechariah and Elizabeth, the shepherds, Simeon and Anna. They are a picture of the faithful remnant and the core of the reborn nation, the whole of Israel that will be preserved during the great tribulation. The Child is born long before that time, but they will greet Him as if He were just born (cf. Isa 66:7-8). It is the time for God to bring His Son back into the world, then to accept dominion over the world (Heb 1:6).

Then it is said that He is given as a “son”, which refers to His Godhead, giving Him the right to exercise power as God. This might and power are expressed in the statement “the government will rest on His shoulders [Darby Translation: *shoulder*, singular]”. As Creator and Redeemer (Revelation 4-5), He bears all dominion and all burden. All responsibility rests on Him. But this task is not too great for Him. He will solve all problems and exercise His dominion in a perfectly righteous way. As the One Who brought about salvation, He can say: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Mt 28:18). He will use that power in blessing and in judgment.



In the parable of the lost and found sheep that the Lord Jesus tells us, we read that He puts the sheep “on His shoulders” (plural) (Lk 15:4-6). For the dominion of the world, one shoulder suffices; to bring a lost sheep back to the flock, He uses both His shoulders. Similarly, the high priest in the Old Testament in the picture of the two precious stones with on them the names of the twelve tribes bears the entire people on both His shoulders (Exo 28:9-13).

That He is the Son Who is “given”, shows that He is already Son before He is born as a Child. He is the eternal Son Who became Man and was given in that way. The fact that the Son is “given” also recalls the grace and love of God for lost people: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

The Son is not only *worthy*, but He is also *capable* to exercise dominion. His Name, which describes His features, demonstrates that. His Name is He Himself in His Person. His Name is in the first place “Wonderful” (cf. Jdg 13:18). In His Person He is beyond our human thinking, for “no one knows the Son but the Father” (Mt 11:27a; Rev 19:12b). His Name is “Wonderful” because He is wonderful in Himself and because He did a wonderful work on the cross for the glory of God and for our salvation. Above all, reverence and admiration befits us toward Him.

Immediately follows that He is “Counselor”. This indicates His wisdom. Nobody advises Him, He never has to consult anyone. “Who became His counselor?” (Rom 11:34b). He works according to a plan perfectly conceived by Himself, which He carries out in wisdom without hesitation and without ever having to return to anything. All those He involves in His plans and to whom He makes them known, He gives counsel (Isa 11:2; Psa 32:8). The counsel He gives is wonderful; it transcends human capabilities. The two features ‘wonderful’ and ‘counsel’ are also found in Isaiah 25 and 28 (Isa 25:1; 28:29).

It is also possible to consider these two expressions as one Name, a double name: Wonderful Counselor. That unity in the Name or double name can also be seen in the three following Names: Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. The Messiah, He Who is Child and Son, has four wonder-

ful Names with in each Name a combination of His Being and a feature that enlarges His glory. They are all honorary names of the Messiah.

He is capable to carry out all His purposes, for He is the “Mighty God” (cf. Isa 10:21). That Name indicates the great contrast with failing, weak, mortal man. The Name “Eternal Father” is literally “Father of Eternity”. The Lord Jesus, because He is the One this description is about, is clearly distinguished in the Godhead as the eternal Son from the eternal Father. The name “Father” therefore has here the meaning of origin, from Whom something originates. The Lord Jesus is ‘Father of eternity’ in the sense that He is the origin of eternity. This is how the Septuagint translates this verse: Father of the age to come (cf. Heb 6:5).

In the Old Testament ‘eternity’ often refers to the millennial realm of peace. The many times that it is said “His lovingkindness is everlasting” (Psa 118:1-4; 136:1-26) indicates that time. The realm of peace is the time when He will openly reign as the “Prince of Peace”. He will subdue every rebel, remove every disruptive element, and thus work peace for His people and all nations. This is the “peace on earth” the angels announced at His birth (Lk 2:14).

He wants to give His peace right now in the hearts of all those who have peace with God through Him. When Christ says: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you” (Jn 14:27a), the first “peace” is peace *with* God. It is the peace that Christ “leaves” behind through His death for all who believe. The second “peace” refers to the peace *of* God that Christ experienced on earth through perfect fellowship with God and that He now “gives” to each one who is guided by Him.

Peace *with* God is given to the sinner when he confesses his sins and believes in the work of the Lord Jesus and that God has accepted that work (Rom 4:24-25; 5:1). The peace *of* God is the part of the believer who brings all things to God in prayer (Phil 4:6-7). Prayer is one of the proofs that someone puts his life under the dominion of the Lord Jesus and already now acknowledges Him as Lord, while the world does not yet.

The area of His reign will expand more and more and be all-encompassing (verse 7). It will encompass heaven and earth with all imaginable powers and result in God being all and in all (1Cor 15:20-28).

The *duration* of His reign will be endless (Lk 1:33; Rev 11:15). He will not be succeeded by another ruler (Dan 2:44). The promise that He will sit on the throne of His father David (2Sam 7:16) will be fulfilled. It is a throne that is “forever and ever” (Heb 1:8). His endless reign will culminate in “the day of God” with its “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2Pet 3:13).

This marvelous result will not be achieved by human effort. No human will be involved. The “zeal of the LORD of hosts”, that is the Lord Jesus, is the driving force behind everything. His zeal was kindled when the honor of His Father was affected (Jn 2:13-17). With the same zeal with which He cleansed the temple, He will also cleanse the earth, which belongs to Him as well as the temple (Psa 24:1). His zeal is the fire of His indignation toward all those who have wickedly treated His earthly, chosen people, who have tried to destroy it. His zeal is also the fire of His love with which He will do good to His people. Therefore, this fire must consume all unfaithfulness from among them.

Phinehas shows such a zeal for which he is praised and rewarded (Num 25:6-14). This zeal of the LORD for His people is also seen in Paul for the church (2Cor 11:2). It is a zeal by which all elements are judged that stand in the way of the full dedication to the Lord Jesus. What is true for a local church like Corinth, is true for every local church today. It also applies to the life of each individual believer.

### Isa 9:8-12 | Pride of Ephraim Judged

8 *The Lord sends a message against Jacob,  
And it falls on Israel.*  
9 *And all the people know [it],  
[That is], Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria,  
Asserting in pride and in arrogance of heart:*  
10 *“The bricks have fallen down,  
But we will rebuild with smooth stones;  
The sycamores have been cut down,  
But we will replace [them] with cedars.”*  
11 *Therefore the LORD raises against them adversaries from Rezin  
And spurs their enemies on,*

12 *The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west;  
And they devour Israel with gaping jaws.  
In [spite of] all this, His anger does not turn away  
And His hand is still stretched out.*

The promises of verses 6-7 are in the following section, Isaiah 9:8 to Isaiah 10:4, followed by further public condemnations of evil and warnings for the impending judgment. The previous section, Isaiah 6:1 to Isaiah 9:7, can be seen as an intermediate section, an important one, because it says so much about Christ. That it is about Christ only confirms that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10b).

From Isaiah 9:8 we are back in the atmosphere of Isaiah 5 after a long interjection. In Isaiah 5 the expression is written that comes back in the next section, Isaiah 9:8 to Isaiah 10:4, as a refrain: “In [spite of] all this, His anger does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out” (Isa 5:25; 9:12,17,21; 10:4). This expression has to do with God’s judgment of an unfaithful and apostate people. The people need to be reminded of this again and again.

The refrain divides the next section into four parts. The first mention of the refrain is preceded by the fact that the Lord (*Adonai*) *sends* a message against Jacob, a message that *falls* in Israel (verse 8; cf. Amos 3:1; 4:1; 5:1). Their sinful practices make this necessary. The message that is sent to them and falls on them in accordance with the covenant made with them expresses God’s constant wish that they will repent.

Their sinful conduct repeatedly results in the discipline of the LORD in accordance with the covenant (Deuteronomy 28-30; 1 Kings 8; Amos 4). Therefore the expression ‘message’ here is translated by the Septuagint as ‘plague’. Those plagues will reach a climax and bring about conversion before the promised blessing and light can be given.

Although it is a message for “Jacob” and “Israel”, i.e. for “all the people”, it mainly refers to “Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria”, i.e. the ten tribes (verse 9). The inhabitants of Ephraim are guilty of pride and arrogance. They show a continuous hardening of their hearts. Prophetically, the north of Israel in particular will have to endure a tough time because of the invasion of the king of the North.

Despite the failure of the alliance with Syria – because that alliance did not help to stop Assyria – there is no conversion. The LORD has called them to listen to His rod, Assyria (Mic 6:9). Instead, they are making even greater plans in their pride. They will do even better than last time, the results will surpass the previous situation (verse 10). How hard learning, yes, how incorrigible is man.

Assyria seems supreme, but Israel must learn the lesson that Assyria is only an instrument in the hand of the LORD. This is a lesson that all believers of all times should take to heart. It means putting the call into practice: “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God” (1Pet 5:6).

Today, people react in exactly the same way to disasters, which come across the world as a call from God to repent. What has been destroyed, they will rebuild with better materials and even bigger and more luxurious. It also benefits the economy. With this same indestructible enthusiasm, the politicians are injecting themselves with courage to do even better in the next term of government.

Because of the stubborn pride of the ten tribes, the LORD Himself will “raise” and “spur on” new enemies against them, so that they will come to them (verse 11). This shows that their mighty enemies are only instruments in God’s hand. This is true for Israel at the time of King Pekaiiah, and will also be true at the time of the invasion of the king of the North.

Their alliance with Syria (the Arameans) did not bring any advantage, but on the contrary new enemies. Enemies of Rezin the king of Syria (Isa 7:1) – meaning the Syrian enemies of Rezin who are at the side of Assyria – are now also hostile to Israel. Here we will have to think of Assyria in particular. Also Syria itself will attack them, from the east (verse 12). From the west come the Philistines. Thus Israel will be greedily devoured by them. Because of the persistent evil of His people, God does not turn away His anger from them and cannot withdraw His striking hand.

### **Isa 9:13-17 | Unrepentance of Ephraim Judged**

*13 Yet the people do not turn back to Him who struck them,  
Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts.*

*14 So the LORD cuts off head and tail from Israel,*

*[Both] palm branch and bulrush in a single day.  
15 The head is the elder and honorable man,  
And the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail.  
16 For those who guide this people are leading [them] astray;  
And those who are guided by them are brought to confusion.  
17 Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men,  
Nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows;  
For every one of them is godless and an evildoer,  
And every mouth is speaking foolishness.  
In [spite of] all this, His anger does not turn away  
And His hand is still stretched out.*

In these verses the prophet gives a second explanation of the causes and necessity of Divine judgments. Because they continue to refuse to turn back to the LORD and seek Him (verse 13), he must also conclude this second refrain with the refrain that the anger of the LORD has not been turned away and His hand is still stretched out against them in judgment (verse 17).

The verdict this time is internal and consists of removing their political and religious leaders. "In a single day" they will come to their end (verse 14), suddenly, although it has been announced so often. The "palm branch" are the leaders, the "bulrush" are those who are led. The leaders, "the elder and honorable man", are "the head", the most responsible (verse 15). The false prophet is "the tail". He is contemptuously compared to the moving tail of a dog. As it suits him, he prophesies. These false prophets do not want to be led by the LORD, but by the political leaders, just as a tail that reflects the state of mind of the head.

Thus, the leaders, palm branch or tall trees, bring those guided by them, reed or low plants, "to confusion" (verse 16). The deceivers do the same with those who let themselves to be deceived. They can no longer discover the straight path, the path of the LORD, and therefore cannot go it.

The verdict comes on "their young men", the hope and at the same time the pride of the nation (verse 17). They count on their own strength. Therefore the LORD cannot rejoice over them, but must judge them. Judgment comes even on those to whom God's concern is greatest, "their orphans or

their widows”, because they too follow the deceivers (cf. Psa 68:5; 146:9). Those who let themselves to be deceived have consciously chosen to wander. They are all – the deceivers and the deceived – guilty of leaving the LORD and of not listening to His warnings. Therefore, His anger remains on them and His hand remains stretched out against them in judgment.

### Isa 9:18-21 | Wickedness of Ephraim Judged

*18 For wickedness burns like a fire;  
It consumes briars and thorns;  
It even sets the thickets of the forest aflame  
And they roll upward in a column of smoke.  
19 By the fury of the LORD of hosts the land is burned up,  
And the people are like fuel for the fire;  
No man spares his brother.  
20 They slice off [what is] on the right hand but [still] are hungry,  
And they eat [what is] on the left hand but they are not satisfied;  
Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm.  
21 Manasseh [devours] Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh,  
[And] together they are against Judah.  
In [spite of] all this, His anger does not turn away  
And His hand is still stretched out.*

For the third time a warning is given of the Divine anger. The prophet points to the wickedness they commit and through which they also work their own destruction (verse 18). Today we recognize this in the dissolute way in which sexuality in particular and life in general is dealt with. All boundaries God has given for that purpose are blurred and finally erased.

People consume their own lives through their wicked way of life. Wickedness does its consuming (“fire”) and suffocating (“smoke”) work among them. The rising smoke is also a characteristic of hell, the place where all wickedness is given up to eternal fire (Rev 14:11a; 19:3b).

The LORD shall give up the land to civil war with all the cruelty, hunger, and self-destruction that go with it (verse 18). The land will be blackened, making it impossible to grow anything on it. Just as briars and thorns

(verse 19) are food for the fire, so the people consisting of hardened sinners are food for the judgment of the LORD.

One of the judgments to which the LORD gives up His people is that of civil war. Because of this, selfishness will also prevail. No one grants another a bite of bread (verse 20). The need will be so great that not even one's own brothers will be spared (verse 21). Manasseh, the divided tribe with one half in the land and the other half outside, who therefore knows the consequences of division, goes up against the great leader Ephraim. Ephraim, for whom it has always been difficult to be the least (Jdg 12:1), does not tolerate that.

When they are ready with fighting, they turn against Judah together. By the fury of the LORD they do their best to take each other's lives. Then for the third time the refrain sounds that the anger of the LORD does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out against them in judgment.

Also among us, Christians, a brotherly quarrel can be allowed by the Lord as a chastening from Him, because we do not acknowledge Him in our lives. If the relationship with Him is not good, it always has consequences for the relationships between the members of His people and between people in general.

When Christians boast of outward religiosity while not listening to the commandment of brotherly love, the consequence is that they bite and eat each other. If this is not stopped, they will devour each other (Gal 5:15). In local churches where such situations are found, it is important to acknowledge this as a judgment from God. Then one can humbly turn to Him and to one another instead of boasting of his privileges any longer.



## Isaiah 10

### **Isa 10:1-4 | God's Anger Against Abuse of Power**

*1 Woe to those who enact evil statutes  
And to those who constantly record unjust decisions,  
2 So as to deprive the needy of justice  
And rob the poor of My people of [their] rights,  
So that widows may be their spoil  
And that they may plunder the orphans.  
3 Now what will you do in the day of punishment,  
And in the devastation which will come from afar?  
To whom will you flee for help?  
And where will you leave your wealth?  
4 Nothing [remains] but to crouch among the captives  
Or fall among the slain.  
In [spite of] all this, His anger does not turn away  
And His hand is still stretched out.*

These verses are a continuation of Isaiah 9. Again evil is clearly stated. This time it is the sins of those who have the power to enact laws (verse 1). In the laws they enact, they constantly record unjust decisions. In an application for today, we see that it is legally established that the theory of evolution must be taught in schools and that education about homosexuality is made compulsory in schools.

Laws should serve to protect the subjects. But the makers of laws abuse their power to deprive the socially weak, “the needy ... the poor ... widows ... the orphans”, of their rights and even to exploit and plunder them (verse 2). The needy and the poor par excellence is the Lord Jesus. During His life on earth, the greatest injustice has been done to Him by people who make and apply laws.

The Lord speaks of “the scribes and the Pharisees”, who “have seated themselves in the chair of Moses” (Mt 23:2), which indicates that they are taking the place of the legislator. He makes serious reproaches to these

people: “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders” (Mt 23:4). He also says of them that they “devour widows’ houses” (Mk 12:40). He is scathing in His criticism of the ruling class, as the LORD does here. The same goes for all religious lordship which enriches itself at the expense of defenseless people, which is found par excellence, but not exclusively, in roman-catholicism.

But “the day of punishment” comes for them (verse 3). “The devastation which will come from afar”, this is the armies of Assyria, which will strike them. “To whom” will they be able to “flee for help”? When God’s judgment comes on these people, they will have no one to help them, just as they left the oppressed without help. They will not be able to protect their wealth, on which they boast – perhaps “your wealth” also means their offspring (Hos 9:11) – when “the day of punishment” comes for them. Nothing but shame and imprisonment will be their fate, while many will also be killed (verse 4).

Then for the fourth and last time the refrain sounds that the anger of the LORD does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out against them in judgment.

### **Isa 10:5-6 | Assyria as the Disciplinary Rod of the LORD**

*5 Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger  
And the staff in whose hands is My indignation,  
6 I send it against a godless nation  
And commission it against the people of My fury  
To capture booty and to seize plunder,  
And to trample them down like mud in the streets.*

After the LORD emphatically showed His people their sins, here suddenly comes the judgment on the disciplinary rod used by Him. The king the LORD uses to chasten His people also has to deal with the judgmental God because he does not think he is just an instrument. Verses 5-19 give a striking example of how the LORD used the heathen people as a discipling rod for His people. In doing so, He has given them a far-reaching authority over His people. The heathen peoples on their side do not think of God,

however. They think to carry out their own plans and to accomplish them in their own strength. That is why God's judgment also comes on them.

Isaiah pronounces the "woe" over Assyria at a time when Judah and Ahaz still expect everything from an alliance with Assyria. The LORD sent Assyria to His people "as the rod of My anger" (verse 5). A rod serves to discipline. The anger of the LORD enables Assyria to attack Judah. It also depicts what will happen in the near future, in the period of God's anger over Judah. Then the prophetic Assyria, the coming king of the North as the leader of the Arab allies, will discipline Israel.

The LORD sends this enemy to His people because they are "a godless nation" (verse 6). They are a nation who honor Him with their lips, while their hearts are far away from Him. He is so angry with His people that He commands Assyria to make His people suffer greatly. Their sins are so terrible, that Assyria must plunder and trample His people. All their possessions are taken from them and all their lives are trampled "like mud in the streets". This is a poignant description of the judgment God brings on His people. It shows how vexed God is by the sins of His people.

This does not mean that Assyria knows the anger of God toward His people. Assyria pursues its own interests and seeks only its own benefit. He knows nothing of being an instrument in God's hand. Thus, all unbelievers believe that they are free to do as they please, while God can use them in His sovereignty to fulfill His plans. In this way God turns the 'woe' over Israel into a 'woe' over the enemies of Israel.

### Isa 10:7-11 | The Motivations of Assyria

7 Yet it does not so intend,  
Nor does it plan so in its heart,  
But rather it is its purpose to destroy  
And to cut off many nations.  
8 For it says, "Are not my princes all kings?  
9 "Is not Calno like Carchemish,  
Or Hamath like Arpad,  
Or Samaria like Damascus?  
10 "As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols,

*Whose graven images [were] greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,  
11 Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images  
Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?"*

The king of Assyria has no connection whatsoever with God. He does not have the intention of God, but his own intention and acts accordingly (verse 7). In his heart he does not consider the things of God, but quite different things. That is why he also lives in enmity against God (Rom 8:5-8). Thus the prophet Nahum says about Assyria: "From you has gone forth one who plotted evil against the LORD, a wicked counselor" (Nah 1:11). We see here that God knows the heart and thoughts of the wicked through and through. All things are open and laid bare to His eyes, even the deepest hidden motives of the heart (Heb 4:12-13; 1Cor 4:5).

Assyria wants to wipe out and exterminate as many peoples as possible in order to enlarge its territory and expand its rule. That's why he now wants to annex Judah as well. He imagines himself to be superior. His princes are all kings, he brags (verse 8). Proudly he points to earlier successes (verse 9). Also the ten tribes realm, Samaria, is already in his hands.

In his delusion of grandeur he now thinks he can incorporate Jerusalem. To him it is a city like any other. To him, the God of Israel is also no more than an idol, yes, even less than the idols of other countries (verse 10; cf. Isa 36:19-20). Therefore, he believes he can conquer Jerusalem even more easily than the other cities he has conquered (verse 11). This is also what Jerusalem has caused by its behavior. Instead of being a testimony to God's name, they have replaced God with idols.

The king of Assyria doesn't even speak about his gods who would have given him the victory. He boasts that he owes everything to himself, that he did it himself, "as I have done", thus declaring himself a god.

### **Isa 10:12-15 | The Arrogance of Assyria**

*12 So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work  
on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, [He will say], "I will pun-  
ish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and  
the pomp of his haughtiness." 13 For he has said,  
"By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did [this],*

*For I have understanding;  
 And I removed the boundaries of the peoples  
 And plundered their treasures,  
 And like a mighty man I brought down [their] inhabitants,  
 14 And my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest,  
 And as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth;  
 And there was not one that flapped its wing or opened [its] beak or chirped."  
 15 Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it?  
 Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?  
 [That would be] like a club wielding those who lift it,  
 [Or] like a rod lifting [him who] is not wood.*

The LORD already knows the proud thoughts of the king of Assyria, who will be as successful as it fits for the fulfillment of God's plan. When Assyria has performed the work of the Lord (*Adonai*), He will deal with the king of Assyria (verse 12). The purpose of His work is for a remnant of His people to be converted to Him and for the wicked mass to be judged. The retributive judgment of the disciplinary rod comes not so much on the person of the king of Assyria, but on "the fruit of the arrogant heart ... and the pomp of his haughtiness". His arrogance drives him and the pomp of his haughtiness shows the total absence of the acknowledgment of God.

We often see in the old testament prophecies that there is a direct pre-fulfillment in the days of the prophet, or shortly afterward, and a fulfillment in the end time, the final fulfillment. This is also the case here. Assyria will want to take Jerusalem, but will be judged by God when He has done His work through this enemy by using him as a disciplining rod for His people. The direct fulfillment we see in the days of Hezekiah (2Kgs 19:35-37). The final fulfillment we see in the future in the advance and destruction of the king of the North (Dan 11:45). This will take place when he and his armies return from Egypt (Dan 11:40-44).

The king of Assyria is full of himself. He speaks of "the power of my hand" and "my wisdom" as the means by which he has achieved his successes (verse 13). Strength and wisdom are indispensable for a ruler. The Messiah possesses these features as well (Isa 11:2; 1Cor 1:24). He uses His power in wisdom. Someone who boasts of these qualities as something of himself

and in whom power takes precedence over wisdom, is a foolish braggart and a ruthless dictator.

He boasts that he has taken away the boundaries established by God between the nations (Deu 32:8; cf. Job 24:2a) and plundered the nations with the greatest ease. He also feels and presents himself as God when he says that he “like a mighty man ... brought down [their] inhabitants”. This is also evident from the words “I” and “my” of which verses 13-14 are full (cf. Hab 1:11). It is the language also used by “the man of lawlessness” (2Thes 2:3-4), which is the antichrist.

He continues to describe himself as the undisputed ruler against whom no one dares to resist. He accentuates his exaltation by making a comparison to someone who takes eggs from a bird’s nest (verse 14). The bird on the nest is chased away and has to watch helplessly as the hand takes the eggs from the nest. In this way Assyria has taken away the power of the nations and gathered the entire world. Nobody dared to resist or even protest against his actions.

The LORD puts an end to all that bragging. He shows in the picture of “axe”, “saw”, “club” and “rod” that the king of Assyria is no more than a tool in His hand, doing what His outstretched hand wants (verse 15). Just as these tools do not have any say with him by whom they are handled, neither does the king of Assyria have any say with the LORD.

### **Isa 10:16-19 | The LORD Judges Assyria**

*16 Therefore the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will send a  
wasting disease among his stout warriors;  
And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame.  
17 And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame,  
And it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day.  
18 And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of  
his fruitful garden, both soul and body,  
And it will be as when a sick man wastes away.  
19 And the rest of the trees of his forest will be so small in number  
That a child could write them down.*

Because the king of Assyria has expressed and acted so arrogantly, “the Lord, the GOD [or: LORD] of hosts” (verse 16) will punish his arrogance. Those who feast and look stout will suffer a wasting disease. Nothing remains of their fat. They will look lean and skimpy. The scorching glory of the appearance of the LORD which will burn his riches is aptly represented in His names “light of Israel” and “his Holy One”, which is the Holy One of Israel (verse 17). On the other hand, Assyria will be nothing more than “thorns” and “briars” that are food for the fire of the LORD.

His armed force, “the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden”, will also be consumed by the LORD (verse 18). Everything that lives will fade away just as someone who is sick fades away. Thus all the glory of Assyria will be destroyed. What is left of the army is so small that you don’t even have to count to ten, so to speak, to determine its number (verse 19). This leftover makes no impression at all.

Historically Assyria has been destroyed by the Babylonians. Prophetically Assyria will be destroyed by the LORD Himself in a supernatural way, just like in the time of King Hezekiah. Later the Medes and Persians will become the ‘saw’ and the ‘axe’ for the Babylonians. It continues in this way until the moment comes when the Lord Jesus will establish His kingdom. That kingdom will not be destroyed and will not be succeeded by a next kingdom (Dan 2:44).

### **Isa 10:20-23 | A Remnant Will Return**

*20 Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.*

*21 A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.*

*22 For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, [Only] a remnant within them will return;*

*A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.*

*23 For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.*

Defeating the Assyrians is a picture of defeating the assembled armies that will advance against Jerusalem in the end time. “In that day” (verse 20)

points to that. "That day" is not a day of twenty-four hours, but a period. It is the period from the moment the Lord Jesus rises to claim His rights on the earth – His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives in that day (Zec 14:4) – up to and including His reign in the millennial realm of peace.

It begins with the return of the remnant, "the remnant of Israel". When the king of the North is destroyed by the appearance of the Lord Jesus, the remnant of the ten tribes realm still in scattering is also gathered together (Mt 24:31). Israel will then no longer rely on the heathen power Assyria that struck him, but on "the LORD, the Holy One of Israel".

That weak remnant, meaningfully called "the remnant of Jacob", no longer counts on his own strength and returns to "the mighty God" (verse 21; cf. 2Chr 30:6). And Who is "the mighty God"? No one but the born Child and the given Son, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, Whose name is "Mighty God" (Isa 9:6). Remarkably, the first words of verse 21, "a remnant will return", are the translation of the Hebrew Shear-jashub, the name of a son of Isaiah (Isa 7:3).

That this part not only relates to the invasion of Assyria that will take place soon, but also looks forward to the end time, is also clearly shown in verses 22-23. At the end of the great tribulation comes the "destruction". In that destruction both the unbelieving mass of Israel (Zec 13:8a) and the Assyrians perish. The number of the people will have decreased so much that only a handful of the once numerous people will remain (verse 22; Zec 13:8b-9). But this remnant is at the beginning of the kingdom of peace the nucleus from which again a multitude of people will grow.

The righteousness of God will flood the land. Everything will come under His righteous judgment. It is a destructive judgment on all wickedness (verse 23). It is decreed (Dan 9:26-27), no one can stop it. "The Lord GOD of hosts" Himself will do it. He will do it "in the midst of the whole land", which is the land of Judah.

The apostle Paul applies verses 22-23 to the remnant according to God's gracious choice in his days (Rom 9:27-28). This remnant is part of the Christian church at this time, which consists of believers from Jews and Gentiles who merge into the one body that is the church (Eph 2:13-16).



**Isa 10:24-27 | The Remnant Is Liberated**

*24 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, "O My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt [did]. 25 For in a very little while My indignation [against you] will be spent and My anger [will be directed] to their destruction." 26 The LORD of hosts will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and His staff will be over the sea and He will lift it up the way [He did] in Egypt. 27 So it will be in that day, that his burden will be removed from your shoulders and his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be broken because of fatness.*

The Lord GOD of hosts says to His people not to fear the Assyrians (verse 24). They will come and strike them, but after "a very little while" the indignation of the LORD against them will come to an end (cf. Isa 9:12,17,21; 10:4) and then His anger will turn against the Assyrians (verse 25). After all, that is how it was with the Egyptians, isn't it? They were oppressed at first, but then God's hand turned against this enemy of His people (cf. Isa 52:4). This is how it will be with Assyria.

Isaiah also recalls how Midian was stricken (verse 26; Jdg 7:25; cf. Isa 9:4). He also reminds them of the deliverance of the people when they stand before the Red Sea. The Israelites have no way to go. The sea is before them and Pharaoh with his army behind them. Then Moses lifts up his staff, which is here the staff of the LORD, and a path comes in the sea. The Israelites pass through it, while Pharaoh and his army perish in the sea.

It is good to remember how God has saved us from distress in the past. That gives courage to trust Him also in view of an upcoming situation of distress. In that trust Isaiah mentions the outcome. The burden will be removed from the shoulder, the yoke will be broken (verse 27). The burdened heart relieves, captivity and bondage are over. Inwardly there is peace, outwardly there is freedom, "because of fatness". 'Fatness' literally is 'oil', used to anoint. Therefore others translate "because of the anointing" that is, because of Christ, the Anointed, Who will then reign in Jerusalem.

Assyria of the end time is the same as the king of the North (Dan 11:1-35) with behind it the great empire of Gog (Russia). He invades the land

and floods everything. The king of the North is the leader of a coalition of ten countries (Psa 83:5-8) north of Israel, all islamic (Shiite?) and with a great hatred of Israel. After the destruction of the king of the North on the mountains of Israel, his place is taken by Gog – Russia and its allies. But there is no need to fear because the Lord Jesus will also completely destroy that last enemy of His people (Ezekiel 38-39).

### **Isa 10:28-32 | The March of Assyria**

*28 He has come against Aiath,  
He has passed through Migron;  
At Michmash he deposited his baggage.  
29 They have gone through the pass, [saying],  
“Geba will be our lodging place.”  
Ramah is terrified, and Gibeah of Saul has fled away.  
30 Cry aloud with your voice, O daughter of Gallim!  
Pay attention, Laishah [and] wretched Anathoth!  
31 Madmenah has fled.  
The inhabitants of Gebim have sought refuge.  
32 Yet today he will halt at Nob;  
He shakes his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.*

In verses 28-34, first the march and then the humiliation of Assyria in his fight against Judah are presented in a vivid manner. First the unstoppable march of the enemy from the north to Jerusalem is vividly described. In the spirit the prophet sees that he invaded the realm of Judah via Ephraim.

“Aiath”, “Migron” and “Michmash” are conquered (verse 28). Aiath (mentioned Ai in Jos 7:2 and Aija in Neh 11:31) is the northernmost of the places in verses 28-32. Aiath lies on the border between Ephraim and Benjamin, about fifteen kilometers north of Jerusalem. Migron and Michmash are located a few kilometers south of Aiath. To cross the mountain pass – a very steep wadi – the “baggage” is deposited at Michmash. In “Gibeah”, directly on the other side of the wadi, they spend the night (verse 29). The news of their advance causes panic throughout the area north of Jerusalem.

The prophet is so involved in this scene that he calls on one place to cry aloud and warns another place with the exclamation: “Pay attention!” (verse 30). About yet another place, which may already have been overrun, he can only express a deep pity: “Wretched Anathoth!” He sees how the inhabitants of yet other places try to seek refuge (verse 31).

The same day the Assyrian armies reach “Nob” (verse 32). There they lie down in position. Nob is probably the present Mount Scopus, a few kilometers northeast of Jerusalem, directly north of the Mount of Olives. From here the enemy “shakes his fist”. The whole campaign went smoothly. All that remains is its completion: the capture of Jerusalem. He is about to give “the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem” the deadly blow. But the army of Assyria does not take into account the LORD Who returns to Jerusalem. We see this in the following verses.

### **Isa 10:33-34 | The Armies of Assyria Exterminated**

*33 Behold, the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will lop  
off the boughs with a terrible crash;  
Those also who are tall in stature will be cut down  
And those who are lofty will be abased.  
34 He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron [axe],  
And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.*

Just before the king of Assyria thinks he is captivating Jerusalem, Someone appears on stage Who he did not take into account. This One also shakes His hand and cuts him down (verse 33). Again the prophet presents the Assyrian world power as a mountain forest with tall trees (verse 18) and sets this world power opposite “the Lord, the LORD of hosts” Who cuts down with dreadful force those “who are tall in stature”.

First He used Assyria as His axe to strike His people (verse 15). Now He Himself uses the axe to smite Assyria. Under the mighty blows of Divine power this proud kingdom, which has exalted itself as the cedars of Lebanon, collapses (verse 34). He has called himself “a mighty one” (verse 13). Now he falls under the blows of Him Who alone and rightly can be called “the Mighty One”.

The first fulfillment takes place in the days of Hezekiah (Isa 37:36). The final fulfillment takes place at the end of time (Dan 11:45). In both cases the prophecy means to show that by God's power man's highness is humiliated and his kingdom is ended. This opens the way for the kingdom of God. That is the subject of the next chapter.

## Isaiah 11

### Introduction

When the indignation is over (Isa 10:25), when the public enemies are destroyed and Assyria is judged (Isa 10:5-19), the Messiah and His government, the source of the thousand year blessing of the people of God, can be announced (Isaiah 11-12). The first verses of Isaiah 11 give us the features of the Messiah; in the verses that follow, we see the consequences of His reign.

What we find historically in the history of Hezekiah (2Kgs 19:32-34), is only a pre-fulfillment – and only partially – of what is prophetically described here. The promise of the LORD to the house of David – that the remaining stem, after the cutting down of the oak of Jesse, will be a holy seed (Isa 6:13) – is further elaborated here. Also the promise of Immanuel, God with us (Isa 7:14; 8:10), is now further explained.

### Isa 11:1-5 | The Messiah and the Realm of Peace

*1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,  
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.  
2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of counsel and strength,  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.  
3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,  
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,  
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;  
4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor,  
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;  
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,  
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.  
5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,  
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.*

The word “then” in verse 1 connects Isaiah 10 and Isaiah 11. The picture of the trees of the forest (Isa 10:33-34) is now extended. Here we see a great contrast with the end of the previous chapter. It is the contrast between the mighty cedar forest of Lebanon (Isa 10:34) and the “shoot ... from the stem of Jesse” (verse 1). The cedar forest symbolizes the power (the army) of the king of Assyria. The mighty axe (iron, Isa 10:34) of the LORD is judging the dense forest of Assyria.

However, the counsel of the LORD is fulfilled by a shoot. The shoot is a description of Christ. It shows His humble birth as a descendant of the decayed house of David, which here is compared to “the stem of Jesse”.

David’s name is not even mentioned, but that of his father Jesse. That tells us that the royal family has sunk back to the insignificance of its origins. The stem indicates the decay of the once mighty royal house of David. The descendants of David went their own way. That eventually leads to the end of the kingship of the house of David, which takes place with the exile to Babylon.

But from the stem will shoot a branch, which will take the place of this cut trunk. This is the future Son of David (Mt 1:1), the King of Israel (Jn 1:49). That shoot will produce fruit. That fruit is the Lord Jesus.

The Hebrew word for ‘shoot’ is *netzer*, which is derived from the word *natzer*, a word that comes back in the word Nazareth, from which the word “Nazarene” is derived, a name of the Lord Jesus (Mt 2:23). Whenever we read about Jesus as a Nazarene – not to be confused with ‘Nazirite’ (Num 6:1), which in Hebrew is another word – it is a reference to His humble descent.

The two lines of this verse form a parallel. The second line says in other words about the same as the first line. However, it is not a mere repetition. The second line gives further details, supplementing what is written in the first line. Thus Shoot and Branch indicate the same Person.

Verse 2 gives a wonderful description of the perfect features and abilities of Christ. Christ is the Greek name which is in Hebrew *Messiah*. Both Christ and Messiah mean ‘Anointed One’. Anointing is done with oil. Oil in the Bible is a picture of God’s Spirit (Zec 4:2-6). The description that follows shows that He was not anointed with oil, but with the Holy Spirit

(Acts 10:38). The sevenfold list of names of the Spirit indicates the fullness of His features (1Jn 3:34; Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). There is only “one Spirit” (Eph 4:4), but He is seen here in the fullness of His workings.

The first thing that is said of the Messiah, “the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him”, expresses the perfect pleasure of the Father in Him (Mt 3:17). On Him the Spirit finds the only suitable place on earth to rest. Here we see God, Christ and the Spirit (cf. Rev 1:4). Next, six features of the Spirit resting on Him are mentioned in three pairs. These pairs are connected by the word “and”.

There are a total of seven names for the Holy Spirit Who came upon the Lord Jesus. In the picture we see the seven-armed lampstand, which consists of a shaft and six arms from its sides, three of which come from one side and three from the other side of the shaft (Exo 25:31-32). In all the lamps is olive oil, which makes the lamps burn. Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20,27). The general name of the Spirit, “the Spirit of the LORD”, we can connect to the shaft. The next six names we can connect two by two to the six arms coming out of its side, three on each side.

Remarkable is the explanation of the LORD on the vision of the prophet Zechariah of the golden lampstand and the two olive trees (Zec 4:1-6). This explanation reads: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit” (Zec 4:6). The remarkable thing here is that – what is not to be seen in English – this sentence in Hebrew consists of seven words.

“The spirit of wisdom and understanding” indicates the power of His thinking, His intellectual capacity. “Wisdom” is the ability to discern the nature of men or things in such a way that it is able to fulfill the will of God in the world (see Exo 28:3, where the word “wisdom”, *hokmah*, occurs for the first time). The Messiah judges all things not by human wisdom, by human standards, but by “the wisdom from above” (Jam 3:17a), through which He is able to fulfill the counsel of God. “Understanding” sees and fathoms the essence of people or things. It is the capacity to make complicated things simple by understanding their various parts correctly.

The Messiah fully fathoms what a human being does and why. Nothing is hidden from Him. A foreshadowing of this we see in Bezalel (Exo 35:30-

31), a man filled with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, Who enables him to build a house for God.

"The Spirit of counsel and strength" has more to do with the practice of life. "Counsel" is the capability to draw the right conclusions in a given situation. "Strength" is the capability to carry out conclusions, the outcome of deliberation. The expression "counsel and strength" is also used for strategy and military power (Isa 36:5).

"The Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD" is related to the personal relationship with the LORD. "Knowledge" here is the knowing of the LORD, the knowledge that comes through the intimate fellowship of love. This is perfectly present with the Lord Jesus. He knows the Father. "Fear" is reverence and awe for Him, through which the Lord Jesus lets Himself be guided in everything, so that everything He does is pleasing to the Father (Jn 8:29).

To us, the fear of the Lord is the basis of all other work of the Spirit of the Lord in our life (Pro 1:7a). The Spirit always leads to reverence for God and will never deal with Him in an amicable way, as happens for example in modern Bible translations and in some meetings.

The whole life of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is characterized by fellowship with the Father (verse 3). He lives in the sphere of the Father and everything in His life is focused on doing the will of the Father. It is His delight, His food, to do that will (Jn 4:34). That determines His action in Israel and everywhere and anytime. He never judges only by appearance, as we often do. His judgment is not determined by human standards, by what He sees or hears. He does not rely on impressions or rumors. There is no partiality with Him. His contact with the Father is decisive for His judgment (Jn 5:30).

Everything, every part of His body and every sense organ, functions perfectly and shows what is needed. Mentioned are His nose ["His delight" can also be translated as "His smell"], His eyes and ears, His mouth and breath and His loins and waist.

As for His nose, we see here that the air He inhales is permeated with the fear of the LORD. He will not use His eyes and ears in a frivolous and su-



perfidious way, but to judge all things correctly. He does so thoroughly and righteously. He what lives the heart.

The judgment will come from His lips and from His mouth and also in this He will be subservient to God. We see this in the belt or girdle He wears (cf. Lk 12:37b), while His waist speak of the strength with which He will show His steadfastness, His faithfulness. The making of a righteous judgment is in the Bible a proof of wisdom (1Kgs 3:16-28).

Although He does not need anyone to teach Him in His Divine omniscience either, here He is presented as a Man Who lets Himself be guided in everything by His dealings with the Father. As a result, He always judges perfectly. The Father tells Him what to say and what to speak (Jn 12:49).

He makes the cause of all those who cannot stand up for themselves His own (verse 4). He cares about their fate. He does not do so on the basis of emotion, on the basis of misplaced pity, but “with righteousness” and “with fairness”. On the earth, that is to say on all the wicked (plural), He will bring judgment with the rod, that is the sword, of His mouth. With the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked, the antichrist (2Thes 2:8). He will not even touch him, but only kill him by the breath of His mouth, that is by His word.

In everything He will proceed in a perfectly righteous manner (verse 5). The strength of His action – “loins” and “waist” represent strength – lies in His perfect righteousness and His absolute faithfulness to God and the truth.

### Isa 11:6-10 | The Realm of Peace

*6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,  
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,  
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;  
And a little boy will lead them.  
7 Also the cow and the bear will graze,  
Their young will lie down together,  
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,  
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.*

*9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,  
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
As the waters cover the sea.*

*10 Then in that day  
The nations will resort to the root of Jesse,  
Who will stand as a signal for the peoples;  
And His resting place will be glorious.*

After the description of the Messiah follows a description of the glorious situation of peace that will reign in righteousness on earth under the government of the Messiah, the Prince of peace. Righteousness brings forth peace (Isa 32:1). All kinds of crises that we can experience now, such as climate crisis, financial crisis, social crisis, will no longer be there. They have all disappeared because they have been solved by the Messiah. Peace will also be sweetly present in the realm of the animals (verses 6-8). There is not only peace between the animals, but also between people and animals.

The scene sketched here shows what it was like before the fall into sin. When the curse is removed, that situation will be restored by the Lord Jesus, as Isaiah prophesies here. Then “the period of restoration of all things” will have come, “about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time” (Acts 3:21), including Isaiah.

The earth will then have been set free from the curse that has been placed upon it since man fell into sin and through which peace has been so cruelly and long-lastingly disturbed (Rom 8:19-22). Paul gives a detail in Romans 8 that Isaiah does not know. It says that it is not only the revelation of Christ as the “root of Jesse” (verse 10), but also “the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19), the believers of the New Testament church who are connected with Him.

The realm of peace is the reign of the last Adam, Christ, Who will restore everything that is corrupted by the first Adam, although sin has not been completely abolished then. Righteousness *reigns*, which means that evil is still present, but then is restrained because satan will be bound and imprisoned for a thousand years (Rev 20:2-3). It is indeed a restoration of the time before the fall into sin, where the animals also feed on the herb of the field (Gen 1:30). There is no question of animals devouring each other.

The instigator of evil can do no more evil and cause no more destruction (verse 9). Nor can he exert his darkening influence on the knowledge of the LORD anymore. The whole earth bears the hallmark of “My holy mountain”, which is the temple mountain, God’s dwelling place on earth. The whole earth will be dedicated to God and full of His glory (Isa 6:3).

This is thanks to “the knowledge of the LORD”. This knowledge will be generally present among the inhabitants of the earth, not superficially, but deeply, like the bottom of the sea. This means more than that people possess intellectual knowledge of God. It means much more that people everywhere will live according to God’s principles and His Word.

It is about the reign of Christ and its effect on the creation subject to Him. The believers of today are already a “new creation” (2Cor 5:17) and are subject to their Lord (2Cor 5:15).

In the different animals in the realm of peace we can also see different characters of the redeemed, who can live in peace with each other under the reign of Christ. We already see this distinction in character in the disciples of the Lord Jesus who are all different, yet together they follow Him. It is to be hoped that the peace that will soon be present everywhere on earth will already be present among the believers in the local churches.

Today, the disciples of Christ go out into the world to bring Christ’s message everywhere. But “in that day” (verse 10) all nations will ask for Christ. To this end, the nations will go up to Jerusalem (cf. Isa 2:3). There they will receive instruction about Christ from Israel, for the Israelites will be called “priests of the LORD” (Isa 61:6).

Christ is the Center unto Whom all come. They will see Him as the glorified Man and acknowledge Him as “the root of Jesse”, that is, the One to Whom the house of David owes its birth (Rev 22:16). With “shoot” (verse 1) we think of Christ as Man, Who came forth from the lineage of David. With “root” we think of Him in His Godhead, from Whom the generation of David originated. He is both the Origin and the Descendant of the lineage of David. As God, He is the Origin and as Man, He is the Offspring.

They will also see Him as the “signal for the peoples”, as the One Who is exalted above all nations and to Whom all nations will turn (Psa 72:8-11,17). He is the great landmark. With Him is rest, a rest which He spreads

over the whole earth. Because everything on earth is in accordance with His will, the whole earth is “His resting place” and therefore a glorious resting place. All who then live on earth share in that rest (Mic 4:2-3).

The center of peace will be God’s dwelling place Jerusalem. That is the city He has chosen to let His Name dwell. David’s prayer will then have been fulfilled: “Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place” (Psa 132:8a,13-14; 2Chr 6:41). The glory of this resting place is manifested in the *Shechina*, which is the cloud of the LORD as the visible sign of the glory of His presence.

Paul quotes verse 10 in Romans 15 (Rom 15:12). He does this to show that not only Israel, but also the nations are included in God’s plan of salvation. Mind you, it is not about the church. In the Old Testament the church is a mystery. What matters here is that God’s heart also in the Old Testament goes out to the nations outside of Israel. They certainly have a different place than Israel. Israel was and remains God’s chosen people. It has a separate place in the history of salvation, but this does not mean that God has rejected the other nations.

### **Isa 11:11-14 | The Remnant Assembled**

*11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord  
Will again recover the second time with His hand  
The remnant of His people, who will remain,  
From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath,  
And from the islands of the sea.  
12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations  
And assemble the banished ones of Israel,  
And will gather the dispersed of Judah  
From the four corners of the earth.  
13 Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart,  
And those who harass Judah will be cut off;  
Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,  
And Judah will not harass Ephraim.  
14 They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west;  
Together they will plunder the sons of the east;  
They will possess Edom and Moab,  
And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.*

“On that day ... the Lord will again recover the second time” the scattered remnant of Israel and Judah from all nations (verses 11-12). The first time He did so by the returning of a remnant from the Babylonian exile under Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-3) with a later addition under Ezra (Ezra 7:1,6-8). The people delivered by Him from the Babylonian exile have rejected the promised blessing by rejecting Him in Whom all blessing is contained.

When the Lord Jesus rules, He will fulfill all God’s promises to a remnant gathered by Him “from the four corners of the earth”, that is, from everywhere, from the utmost ends of the earth. This remnant consists of descendants from “Israel” (the ten tribes) and from “Judah” (the two tribes) who were scattered everywhere.

They come from “Assyria”, the world empire, whose core region has always been northern Iraq, with the cities of Assur and Nineveh. The world empire of Assyria runs from northern Iraq to Pakistan. They also come from “Egypt”. “Pathros” means the Southland, which is Egypt and especially Lower Egypt. “Cush” is Ethiopia and Sudan. Also from there many Jews have returned to Israel in the course of time.

The return from “Elam” we see in the exodus from Persia, that is Iran. “Shinar” is today’s southern Iraq with the city of Babylon in it. Sinear is equal to Babylon. “Hamath” is today’s Syria. With “the islands of the sea” Europe can be meant. It is the countries and islands in and around the Mediterranean Sea. In the past decades we have experienced how Jews from all the areas mentioned went to the land of Israel. We can see this as a first fulfillment of what Isaiah prophesied here.

Ephraim, the ten tribes realm, will no longer envy the privileged place of Judah, and Judah will no longer be dominant over Ephraim (verse 13), as it was in the time of Isaiah. The root of jealousy (Isa 9:21a), which has existed in the two and the ten tribes since the time of the tearing of the realm (1Kgs 12:19-20), has finally disappeared. Ephraim has been cured of this ailment, jealousy, forever. They will be one nation and will live together as brothers (Eze 37:22). Together they will, following the LORD and clothed with His power, fight and subdue the enemies, the surrounding nations, and thus rid themselves of their yoke (verse 14; Mic 5:7-8).

Here we talk about a victory over “the Philistines ... on the west”. That refers to the future conquest of the Gaza Strip. “The shoulder” refers to the western mountain slope. There the Israelites will attack them at breakneck speed. Edom, Moab and the Ammonites will also be subdued. Edom is the area of Southern Jordan, Moab the area of Central Jordan and Ammon the area of Northern Jordan. All of Jordan will come under their authority.

Unity and one mindedness are also an absolute condition for the spiritual battle we are fighting (Phil 1:27b).

### **Isa 11:15-16 | A Highway**

*15 And the LORD will utterly destroy  
The tongue of the Sea of Egypt;  
And He will wave His hand over the River  
With His scorching wind;  
And He will strike it into seven streams  
And make [men] walk over dry-shod.  
16 And there will be a highway from Assyria  
For the remnant of His people who will be left,  
Just as there was for Israel  
In the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt.*

The LORD will make a passage for the expelled of His people to return to the land (verses 15-16). He used to do this by letting the waters of the Red Sea give way to lead His people out of Egypt into the wilderness (verse 15). He used a strong wind for this (Exo 14:21).

He will work again a highway for His people. For that purpose He will make geographical changes, so that a way will arise through which they can enter the promised land from Assyria (verse 16). Something similar can also be found at the end of the great tribulation when the Euphrates falls dry (Rev 16:12). Because of this, there is also a highway for the people of Israel to take possession of their inheritance, the inheritance that the LORD promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen 15:15-21).

## Isaiah 12

### **Introduction**

The first part of the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 1-12) focuses on the redemption of Judah and Jerusalem. Isaiah 12 is an appropriate ending of this part. It has the form of a song. In the previous chapters much has been said about the sins of God's people and the warning of God's anger over them. There is also talk about the forgiveness that God offers in case of repentance and the promises of a glorious future for His people. The Name of God will be exalted and His King will reign. The psalm of praise of this chapter seamlessly connects to that.

In a way we can compare it to the song of Moses in Exodus 15, which is sung immediately after the passage through the Red Sea. Some of the expressions used in it come back here.

The chapter consists of two sections. Both sections start with the words: "Then you will say on that day." The first section (verses 1-3) looks back to Isaiah 1-11. The second section (verses 4-6) looks forward to the salvation as a result of the judgments on the nations described in Isaiah 13-23.

### **Isa 12:1-3 | Thanksgiving**

*1 Then you will say on that day,  
"I will give thanks to You, O LORD;  
For although You were angry with me,  
Your anger is turned away,  
And You comfort me.  
2 "Behold, God is my salvation,  
I will trust and not be afraid;  
For the LORD GOD is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation."  
3 Therefore you will joyously draw water  
From the springs of salvation.*

After looking ahead to the glorious time of the realm of peace in the previous chapter, a song of thanks must follow. That happens in this chapter. We hear the song of praise of the realm of peace. The Spirit of Christ puts the song in the mouth of the redeemed people, the remnant, the third part that has escaped judgment (Zec 13:8) and enjoys the blessing (verse 1). It is the earthly counterpart of the song that the heavenly saints sing before the judgments come on the earth (Rev 5:9-13; cf. Rev 15:3-4).

It is a song in the 'I' form. Every Israelite has his own relationship with the LORD. In this song every member of God's people sings that the LORD has rightly been angry with him. They also sing it together. They will even praise Him for having been angry with them, for by doing so He has brought them back to Himself. The anger of God is expressed through His rod: the Assyrians (Isa 10:5-6). Its effect is that Israel now acknowledges the righteousness of God's anger, a sign of their conversion and restoration. God's rod has now reached its goal.

So far, the anger of God has not been turned away. But now they also sing of the end of His anger and the comfort He gave them afterward (cf. Isa 40:1-2). Everyone is aware of his sins, but also of God's forgiveness. God's discipline in case of sin is always meant to cause people to return to Him. God's discipline when there is no direct sin is always meant to keep His own for sin and to keep them close to Him.

After acknowledging the righteous anger of the LORD, an anger that has found its culmination in the indignation of God (Isa 10:5), they sing of God and Who He is and what He is to them (verse 2). As noted above, it can be compared to the song of praise of Israel after the people were delivered from Egypt (Exo 15:2; Psalms 118:14). He is the "salvation" of the survived believer.

The word salvation is in Hebrew *jeshuah*. It is a word Isaiah uses more than any other prophet. In it we recognize the name Jeshua, Jesus, which means 'Yahweh is salvation'. In the word salvation the name of the Lord Jesus is as it were hidden. The name 'Jesus' remains hidden in the Old Testament.

That Name is in connection with His birth (Isa 49:1) and is therefore only announced when He is about to be born. The meaning of His Name is also directly connected to this announcement: "And you shall call His name



Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). 'Save' and 'salvation' have the same basic meaning. The word salvation with that rich meaning appears three times in verses 2-3.

In their thankfulness for salvation they speak of the "LORD GOD", so twice the name *Yahweh* (cf. Isa 26:4), which is His Name as the God of the covenant He made with His people. They have been unfaithful to that covenant, but He has taken all its conditions upon Himself and fulfilled them. They emphasize herewith that all blessing is only due to the perfect faithfulness of the LORD to His covenant.

The name "*Yah Yahweh*" (LORD GOD) comes from Exodus 34: "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious ..." (Exo 34:6). This Name emphasizes that the perfect faithfulness of the LORD to His covenant is based on His compassion and grace. The trust of the believing remnant is – like that of Hezekiah (Isaiah 36-37) – in the LORD, as opposed to the trust of Judah under King Ahaz (Isa 7:10-12), who puts his trust in the king of Assyria.

As a result, they can now joyously draw water (verse 3), which is refresh themselves with all that salvation implies for them. There are seven feasts of the LORD, from the Passover to the Feast of Booth (Lev 23:4-43). These feasts have a meaning in the history of salvation. In the prophetic meaning of these feasts we see the period from the death of the Lord Jesus to the realm of peace. The Feast of Booth is the great feast of the joy of the end time. In Judaism Isaiah 12 was applied to the Feast of Booth. On this occasion, the priest draws water every day from the Shiloah spring, which he pours out under great cheers in a silver basin next to the bronze burnt offering altar.

We know its true meaning and know that the source of salvation is Christ (Jn 4:14). We see that at the Feast of Booth, when He cries out on the last day, the great day of the feast to anyone who is thirsty: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink" (Jn 7:37b). Here we see how is drawn from Him and that whoever has received the living water as a vessel can pass it on to others. Every blessing can be found in Him. All the springs of the believer are in Him (Psa 87:7). He who drinks from Him can also refresh others.

We see this drawing of water from the springs also in the end time. There comes the great crowd, which no one can count, out of the great tribulation and is led by the Lamb “to springs of the water of life” (Rev 7:15-17).

### **Isa 12:4-6 | Expressions of Joy as Testimony**

*4 And in that day you will say,  
“Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name.  
Make known His deeds among the peoples;  
Make [them] remember that His name is exalted.”  
5 Praise the LORD in song, for He has done excellent things;  
Let this be known throughout the earth.  
6 Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,  
For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.*

If they have first drawn from “the springs of salvation” (verse 3) and become full, they become overflowing vessels as they continue drawing water. The overflowing water flows to others. We see this from verse 4. The first “in that day” (verse 1) expresses the joy over one’s own salvation. The second “in that day” (verse 4) is about the worldwide salvation of the LORD.

The result of all the glorious things they have sung in the preceding verses is that they call one another to praise the LORD and to testify of His deeds among all nations. Everyone should know that He has done “excellent things” (verse 5). The most excellent of all is the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary. On this basis God has been able to decide that salvation comes to Israel and through the fullness of Israel also goes to the nations (Rom 11:12b).

We find here an example of spiritual growth. First, the believer is full of joy about what he himself has received and about his personal relationship with the Lord. Then, he recognizes the need for him to bear witness to the glory of God and call upon others to repent and give glory to God. Thus, having drunk from the source of salvation, they themselves become rivers of living water for others (Jn 7:37-38).

What is our response to what the Lord Jesus has done for us? We should honor Him much more enthusiastically and testify of Him much more

diligently than Israel. The blessing of Israel is limited to the earth and is material. Our blessings are spiritual, heavenly and eternal. When we realize what He has delivered us from and what He has given us, we cannot remain silent.

This command gains even more strength through the affirmation that the "Holy One of Israel" is in their midst. This name is again special for Isaiah. His presence in their "midst" is "great" and is reason to cheer and rejoice (verse 6).

With this it ends and that is also the greatest: the Holy One of Israel is in the midst. The word used for 'midst' is translated several times with 'entrails'. We could say that He is where the collective feelings and affections toward Him originate from. Something similar we see in the church of which Christ is the center of the four dimensional glory (Eph 3:17-19). He wants to live as such in our hearts where He can be known in His love that surpasses knowledge.

The presence of the Lord Jesus in the midst of the church gives real satisfaction to believers for whom this is a reality. It creates worship and gives strength to testify of Him. The real sense of His presence gives joy to the church. If this awareness is not present, the coming together is only routine and does not work anything toward God nor toward the world.

## **Isaiah 13**

### **Introduction**

#### **Overview main part 1.2 – Isaiah 13-27**

#### **God and the nations**

The second part of the first main part (Isaiah 1-35) contains Isaiah 13-27 and can be divided as follows:

1. Prophecy about Babylon (Isaiah 13:1-14:23)
2. Prophecy about Assyria (Isaiah 14:24-14:27)
3. Prophecy about Philistia (Isaiah 14:28-32)
4. Prophecy about Moab (Isaiah 15:1-16:14)
5. Prophecy about Damascus and Ephraim (Isaiah 17:1-14)
6. Prophecy about Cush (Isaiah 18:1-7)
7. Prophecy about Egypt (Isaiah 19:1-25)
8. Prophecy about Egypt and Cush (Isaiah 20:1-6)
9. Prophecy about Babylon (Isaiah 21:1-10)
10. Prophecy about Edom (Isaiah 21:11-12)
11. Prophecy about Arabia (Isaiah 21:13-17)
12. Prophecy about Jerusalem (Isaiah 22:1-25)
13. Prophecy about Tyre (Isaiah 23:1-18)
14. The (prophetic) earth is judged (Isaiah 24:1-23)
15. Psalms and predictions of judgment and deliverance (Isaiah 25:1-12)
16. Praise, prayer and prophecy (Isaiah 26:1-21)
17. The restoration of Israel (Isaiah 27:1-13)

#### **Introduction on Isaiah 13**

In Isaiah 1-12 the hand of the LORD is stretched out against His people (Isa 5:26), but in the part of Isaiah 13-23 the hand of the LORD is stretched

out “against all the nations” (Isa 14:26). The part of Isaiah 13-23 contains the ‘oracles concerning’ or the ‘burdens of’ the nations in the near east. The word “oracle” or “burden” appears here frequently and makes it clear that these chapters form one whole. “Burden” means that the word as judgment from God, which first “falls” on Israel (Isa 9:8), now also falls on all the nations as a heavy weight.

These chapters are the answer to the call: “Make known His deeds among the peoples” (Isa 12:4b). Before the nations can praise the LORD (Isa 12:4a), they must first be cleansed by the judgment of God, just like the people of Israel. The next part, Isaiah 24-27, concerns the whole earth.

There is a danger that we skip these chapters if we read the book of Isaiah because we believe there is little spiritual gain for us in it. But *all Scripture* is inspired by God and useful to us (2Tim 3:16). The nations that surround Israel are seen in their relations with Israel. The burdens of these peoples connect the events coming in the days of Isaiah with the end of time.

They are a fitting sequel to the great subject of the Messianic prophecies in Isaiah 7-12. Therein it is predicted that the authority of the Messiah will be exercised over all kingdoms of the world. They also contain comforting messages for the ultimate blessing and glory of Israel. In accordance with this, the downfall of the heathen powers is foretold. One power after the other falls down, so that there will be room for the establishment of the realm of peace.

Once again, it must be remembered that many oracles about a power have a meaning that goes beyond the imminent judgment on that power. That is, that much in the description of the downfall of a power is also – and sometimes only – fulfilled in the end time and especially at the end of ‘the great tribulation’. In this book this period is called “the indignation” (of the LORD) (Isa 10:5,25; 26:20).

Isaiah 13-14 are the introduction to this period, while at the end of Isaiah 27 there is a brief reference to the realm of peace. The part of Isaiah 14:28-27:13 is a description of events in the world from the last days of the great tribulation until the beginning of the millennial realm of peace. Israel is also mentioned again, but then as part of the world.

The nations that successively are judged are judged because of their idolatry and their attitude toward Israel. The reason they are mentioned, while many other nations are not mentioned, is the way in which they have behaved toward God's people in the past and that they have attacked them. God's people are "the apple of His eye" (Zec 2:8). So whoever touches His people hits the LORD in His heart.

The two other great prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, also prophesy of this judgment on the surrounding nations (Jeremiah 46-51; Ezekiel 25-32). Isaiah and Jeremiah speak in their prophecies about the nations mainly about the destruction of Babylon, although they also speak about other nations, while Ezekiel speaks mainly about God's judgment on Egypt.

### **Isa 13:1 | Prophecy About Babylon**

| 1 *The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.*

After the judgment on Judah and Jerusalem that has been before us in the previous chapters, Isaiah 7-12, now, in Isaiah 13-27, comes the judgment on the nations of the world. As an introduction to this, God begins with the judgment on Babylon (Isaiah 13-14). It begins with "the oracle concerning Babylon" or "the burden of Babylon" (verse 1), for Babylon will destroy the world domination of Assyria and succeed it.

What Isaiah has seen is called "burden" because it is a word from God that is imposed upon the prophet as a burden (Jer 23:33-40). Most prophecies in the following chapters begin with this word "oracle" or "burden". Again, "Isaiah" is called by name. The fact that he has 'seen' this burden emphasizes that it is real prophecy, which was spoken before the fall of Babylon, because in the time of Ahaz, when Isaiah writes this, Babylon is far from being a world power. It also makes clear that with Isaiah 13 a new part begins.

When Scripture speaks of Babylon, it can refer to both the city and the country. Babylon is the same as Babel. Babylon is the Greek name and Babel the Hebrew name. The reader must then see whether this means the city or the country. The first kingdom mentioned in Scripture is that of Babel. It is founded by a man who is a tyrant, a man of violence, and a hunter, i.e. a blood-spilling man (Gen 10:8-10).

In Babylon, the primordial society of mankind after the deluge is together in unity. When the whole earth still uses the same language and the same words, man in Babylon wants to build a tower that reaches to heaven in order to increase his power on earth. God prevents this and at Babel scatters mankind abroad over the face of the whole earth by the confusion of language (Gen 11:1-9). Because of this mankind is divided over the five continents.

The overthrow of the power of Assyria is described in the book of Nahum. There we read of the fall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. At the moment Isaiah utters this prophecy, there is not much to be seen of Babylon as a world power. That Isaiah can start with Babylon as the first nation is only because he sees prophetically the rise of Babylon and also the rise of the next empires. Babylon is the power that will judge Judah because Judah lives in idolatry and rebellion against the LORD. Babylon is also the power that in the end time will make a covenant with the apostate Israel under the antichrist.

The description of the capture of Babylon shows that it happens very violently, unlike the capture of Babylon a century and a half later, in 539 BC, by the Medes and the Persians, which happens almost silently. This is because the emphasis here is on the destruction of the prophetic Babylon in the future, namely that of the first beast, with the ten horns, the leader of the restored Roman Empire, the united states of (ex-Christian) Europe (Rev 13:1-10).

By the way, Assyria is a type of the future king of the North, the leader of the (northeastern) Arab islamic (Shiite?) alliance, supported by Gog and Magog (Russia). Remarkably, Psalm 83 also mentions an alliance consisting of ten countries (Psa 83:5-8).

Finally, we find the king of the South – not mentioned here, but in Daniel 11 (Dan 11:40) – by which we can understand an alliance of (southern) Arab islamic (Sunni?) peoples. They will be the first to attack Israel, followed by the king of the North. If the king of the North has destroyed Israel and especially Jerusalem, he will then attack and overpower the king of the South. Then he will return to Israel because of the coming of the army of the beast (Europe) and be destroyed by Christ (Dan 11:41-45).

## Isa 13:2-5 | Tools of God's Anger

*2 Lift up a standard on the bare hill,  
Raise your voice to them,  
Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the nobles.  
3 I have commanded My consecrated ones,  
I have even called My mighty warriors,  
My proudly exulting ones,  
To [execute] My anger.  
4 A sound of tumult on the mountains,  
Like that of many people!  
A sound of the uproar of kingdoms,  
Of nations gathered together!  
The LORD of hosts is mustering the army for battle.  
5 They are coming from a far country,  
From the farthest horizons,  
The LORD and His instruments of indignation,  
To destroy the whole land.*

The prophecy begins with a triple call or command. On “the bare hill”, that is a mountain without afforestation, that is without anything that obstructs sight, first a sign, “a standard” as a symbol of battle, must be lifted up so that it is clearly visible (verse 2). The standard is followed, secondly, by a cry, “raise your voice,” and, thirdly, by a gesture, “wave the hand,” in order to call God’s armies to action. The call is meant to put the armies in a state of readiness.

The waving of the hand is the sign to let them go up to enter the gates of Babylon. These gates still contain the nobles who form the city government, but it’s time for the conquerors to take over power. There is no mention of any opposition. Babylon was also taken without opposition.

The command goes out from the LORD – “I”, with emphasis (verse 3). The Medes (verse 17) and Persians are called to fulfill their task. They have been chosen by God to put an end to the reign of Babylon. That is why God calls them “My consecrated ones”, for they have been set apart by Him for that purpose and with that mission. It has nothing to do with the persons themselves, that they should be holy in character.



God also calls them "My mighty warriors". He makes them invincible warriors, for they must execute His anger. The armies of the Medes and the Persians "exultingly" fulfill their mission. They feel like it because the Majesty of God urges them. The fact that the LORD Himself gives personal command to destroy Babylon is an indication that in the future He will personally, and then without human instruments, destroy the restored Roman Empire (Dan 2:45).

The single sound of the voice that commands, the voice of the LORD, is replaced by a "sound of tumult on the mountains" (verse 4). It is the tumult "of many people", the armies which the LORD has consecrated to do His work. The armies of the Medes and Persians come from far and wide as "His instruments of indignation, to destroy the whole land" [that is the Babylonian world empire] (verse 5).

Their cheering in the execution of this work does not mean that they are aware that they are executing God's commission or cooperating with God's plan with consent. In the same way, Titus and the Romans do not know that they as an army of "the king," are executing the judgment on Jerusalem that the Lord Jesus speaks of in His parable (Mt 22:7).

It is about the downfall of the land of Babylon (Jeremiah 50-51). Babylon is what we know today as southern Iraq to Baghdad. Assyria is what we know today as northern Iraq north of Baghdad to Pakistan. Media is further to Iran, today's Kurdistan.

Abraham comes from the land of the Chaldeans or Babylon (Gen 15:7; Acts 7:2-4). He has converted to the true God. His descendants are brought back to Babylon in exile because Israel has fallen away from the true God. They end up in the land where their ancestor comes from and there they have served the idols of Babylon. The time of the world domination of Babylon lasts seventy years (Jer 25:11).

Prophetically, this section about Babylon is a shadow of the future judgment on the restored Roman Empire or the future united states of Europe led by a man called 'the beast' (Rev 13:1-10). Then the Lord Jesus Himself, in person, will come "from a distant land, from the farthest horizons [literally: from the end of heaven]", with the heavenly armies to execute judgment on Babylon (Rev 19:11-21).

### Isa 13:6-13 | The Day of the LORD Is Coming

6 *Wail, for the day of the LORD is near!*  
*It will come as destruction from the Almighty.*  
7 *Therefore all hands will fall limp,*  
*And every man's heart will melt.*  
8 *They will be terrified,*  
*Pains and anguish will take hold of [them];*  
*They will writhe like a woman in labor,*  
*They will look at one another in astonishment,*  
*Their faces aflame.*  
9 *Behold, the day of the LORD is coming,*  
*Cruel, with fury and burning anger,*  
*To make the land a desolation;*  
*And He will exterminate its sinners from it.*  
10 *For the stars of heaven and their constellations*  
*Will not flash forth their light;*  
*The sun will be dark when it rises*  
*And the moon will not shed its light.*  
11 *Thus I will punish the world for its evil*  
*And the wicked for their iniquity;*  
*I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud*  
*And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.*  
12 *I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold*  
*And mankind than the gold of Ophir.*  
13 *Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,*  
*And the earth will be shaken from its place*  
*At the fury of the LORD of hosts*  
*In the day of His burning anger.*

In these verses the prophetic scene moves from the imminent downfall of Babylon as a shadow of the future to the future judgments of God on the restored Roman Empire and the entire world in the end time, which is to the coming of “the day of the LORD” (verse 6). It is a day that cannot be stopped or deflected, for it comes “as the destruction from the Almighty”. That day clearly did not begin in 539 BC, when Babylon is defeated by the Medes and the Persians. Then that city is not destroyed. That happens

much later. No, that day will take place in the future regarding the prophetic Babylon (Rev 16:19).

Here, before the eye of the prophet, the judgment on Babylon merges with the final judgment on the restored Roman Empire. In the fulfillment there are many centuries between the two judgments, but in essence they are one. One is a type, a foreshadow, of the other. Babylon is the first of the four great empires (Dan 2:37-40; 7:1-7) and is a shadow of the last representative of the empires, that is the restored Roman Empire.

In our days we see that taking shape more and more in the united Europe, the European Union. For God everything is one whole. The judgment on Babylon is a prelude to the judgment on the beast in the end time. Babylon, represented as a woman, the great harlot, and the beast are closely connected (Rev 17:3b). The great harlot emphasizes the religious aspect of Babylon – the counterpart of the bride – while the beast emphasizes the political aspect of Babylon – the counterpart of Jerusalem, the city of the great King.

The LORD will prove the great Name of His omnipotence in the judgments which He causes to come. In verses 7-8 we see people's reactions to that. The hands become weak, powerless. "Every man's heart" melts away, there is no more courage. The horror and bewilderment can be read on their faces. Their posture of shrinking like a woman in labor and woes fits the horror and pain that plagues them. It all shows that they have not taken into account a judgmental God.

Man's sin and his unrepentance are the cause that the LORD will judge "cruel, with fury and burning anger" on His day when He takes control of the government (verse 9). His judgments affect both "the land" and "its sinners". He makes the land a desolation and sinners are exterminated from the land. Here, to say it with the parable of the dolik (a weed that looks much like wheat) and the wheat, those who do lawlessness are gathered and cast into the furnace of fire (Mt 13:40-42; 24:40-41).

The whole of creation ends up in darkness because "the stars of heaven and their constellations" and "the moon" do not let their "light" shine (verse 10). If there is any hope that the sun will rise at daybreak, then that

hope turns out to be vain, because “sun will be dark when it rises” (Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24).

The judgment on Babylon at the appearance of Christ in the end time affects the whole “world” and not just a certain area as in the time of Isaiah (verse 11; cf. Lk 21:35). It is like the deluge that is also worldwide. God’s judgment is on the world because of “its evil”. That evil is expressed in the “iniquity” of “the wicked”, “the arrogance of the proud” and “the haughtiness of the ruthless”. God will repay the evil, stop the arrogance and humiliate the haughtiness. God has the appropriate answer to all evil.

It is also striking that the judgment on Babylon is exercised by Cyrus, who is called “His anointed” (Isa 45:1), a clear picture of Christ (= Anointed). The name Cyrus means ‘sun’, which is the title of Christ Himself (Mal 4:2).

The fall of Babylon occurs unexpectedly. While the city is celebrating, the army of the Medes and Persians crawls under the city wall after having first shifted the course of the canal that flows through the city. Thus, the coming of Christ to exterminate Babylon will happen like a thief in the night, unexpectedly.

Verse 12 predicts the reduction of the world population at the end of time, just as the Lord Jesus predicts (Mt 24:22; Rev 6:8; 9:19). Through these judgments all the wicked are wiped out. What remains is a remnant that consists of “mortal man”. This indicates that they are no more valuable in themselves than the wicked who have perished. Because of their small number, this remnant is rarer than the rarest and most precious metals. They are spared because of their positive attitude toward Israel (cf. Mt 25:31-41).

It is important in this section to distinguish between the rapture of the believers (1Thes 4:15-18) and the appearance of the LORD to judge. At the rapture, believers are taken from the earth and unbelievers are left behind. At the appearance of the LORD, the Lord Jesus, the wicked are taken away from the earth by the judgment and the believers are left on earth to enter the realm of peace (Mt 24:40-41).

The consequences of the judgments are described even more profoundly in verse 13 than in verse 10. In verse 10 the effects of the judgment are seen in certain parts of creation, while in verse 13 we see the consequences of the

judgment for heaven and earth as a whole. Heaven trembles and the earth shakes from its place (Hag 2:6-7; Heb 12:25-29; Zec 14:4-5). These are the overwhelming consequences of the outpouring of “the fury of the LORD of hosts in the day of His burning anger”. This confirms the remembrance of the deluge, in which heaven and earth have also come in great turmoil.

### Isa 13:14-18 | The LORD Punishes Evil

*14 And it will be that like a hunted gazelle,  
Or like sheep with none to gather [them],  
They will each turn to his own people,  
And each one flee to his own land.  
15 Anyone who is found will be thrust through,  
And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.  
16 Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces  
Before their eyes;  
Their houses will be plundered  
And their wives ravished.  
17 Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them,  
Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold.  
18 And [their] bows will mow down the young men,  
They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb,  
[Nor] will their eye pity children.*

In verse 14 the prophecy returns to the destruction of Babylon. This is evident from the rest of the chapter. All foreigners who were first attracted by the riches of Babylon and sought their advantage on this world market will flee the city to return to their own people and land. Skittish as “a hunted gazelle” and scattered “like sheep” without a shepherd, they will want to escape the advancing armies of the Medes and Persians. Also the restored Roman Empire (Europe) will consist of people from many countries. Later, when judgment comes on them, these people will flee and return to their own people and their own land.

Those who do not flee or are caught on the run fall into the hands of an enemy who spares nothing and no one (verses 15-18). What they encounter on their way is thrust through without pardon or cut down by the sword (verse 15). There is a total lack of respect for what belongs to others in life,

possession, and marriage (verse 16). They do not have the feelings that belong to these matters. Ruthlessly they dash to pieces little children before the eyes of their parents, and ravish women, insensitive to begging them not to do so.

They don't let themselves be bribed, insensitive as they are to silver and gold, which means nothing to them (verse 17). Their goal is to destroy their enemies with ruthless cruelty and to make sure that no new growth can come. Therefore, they dash to pieces boys, kill children already in the womb, and spare no child already born (verse 18).

### **Isa 13:19-22 | Babylon Completely Destroyed**

*19 And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride,  
Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*

*20 It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation;  
Nor will the Arab pitch [his] tent there,  
Nor will shepherds make [their flocks] lie down there.*

*21 But desert creatures will lie down there,  
And their houses will be full of owls;  
Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there.*

*22 Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers  
And jackals in their luxurious palaces.  
Her [fateful] time also will soon come  
And her days will not be prolonged.*

These verses describe the judgment on Babylon. Babylon, which has presented itself as a beauty of all kingdoms, will be stripped of all its splendor and pride (verse 19). It will be with Babylon as with Sodom and Gomorrah which have been turned upside down by God. It will be completely depopulated and will never be inhabited again (verse 20). No Arab of the itinerant Arab nomads (Bedouins) will pitch his tent there anymore because there is nothing to gain anymore. There is also no more shepherd who will bring his flock there because of the crowds of wild animals that are there.

The only inhabitants will be the desert creatures (verses 21-22a). The animals mentioned in these verses living in the fallen Babylon are reminiscent

of Revelation 18 (Rev 18:2). It emphasizes that the final destruction, similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, lies in the distant future. Destruction in the short term is indicated by the words “her [fateful] time also will soon come” (verse 22b). However, the destruction of Babylon in the short term is not like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, because Babylon will revive. Here again we have the principle of the double layer in prophecy, where there is a first fulfillment in the near future and a final fulfillment in the, at that moment, distant future.

The key to whether Babylon will reappear as the center of power and then suffer its final destruction is given in the beginning of Isaiah 14. In that chapter an explanation of the foregoing follows. Isaiah 14 tells of the day of Israel’s deliverance and millennial blessing. This is the day of the LORD which gives them rest from sorrow and fear and slavery and on which they will rejoice because of the destruction of Babylon and express their scorn to the city of the oppressor.

There has been no such utterance about the devastation that has now taken place some two and a half thousand years ago. However, in the future there will be such an expression at the fall of the resurrected city (Rev 18:20). Then the prophecy of this part of Isaiah will have its complete fulfillment. Europe will remain in a ruined state at the beginning of the millennial realm of peace with few inhabitants and so it will remain throughout the whole realm of peace.

## Isaiah 14

### **Isa 14:1 | The LORD Has Compassion on Jacob**

*1 When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.*

The subject of the previous chapter is continued and explained. Now the reason is given for the judgment on the heathen ruler described in the previous chapter. That reason is that the LORD will have compassion on Jacob, the twelve tribes, and fulfill His choice of Israel, the twelve tribes. The judgment on the nations will show His people that He is on their side.

The pre-fulfillment at the time of Zerubbabel only applies to the two tribes realm. The full fulfillment in the future applies to the twelve tribes of Israel. At the time of Zerubbabel Judah remains under the authority of the nations. In the future Israel will have authority over the nations (Isa 14:2).

Four aspects can be distinguished in this context:

1. Judgment on Israel: The heathen ruler has been used by the LORD to discipline His people because His people have become willful and rebellious.
2. Judgment on the nations: The arrogance and excessive cruelty of the nations in their actions compel Him to bring His judgment on these nations when they have accomplished their task of discipling Israel.
3. Blessing on Israel: The promises made to the fathers must be fulfilled. This means that a restoration of Israel must take place.
4. Blessing on the nations: When the restoration of Israel has taken place, this restored Israel will be the instrument through which God will bless the nations.

Just as the fall of Babylon means a partial blessing for Judah – after all, Cyrus gives them permission to return to the land of the fathers (Ezra 1:1-3) – so the judgment of the Lord Jesus on Babylon in the end time will result in full blessing for the whole people. When the song of praise is sung



because of the fall of Babylon (Rev 19:1-6), the wedding of the Lamb will be celebrated immediately afterward (Rev 19:7-9). Immediately after the wedding, Christ returns to earth (Rev 19:11) to sit on His throne in Jerusalem and govern His people, and the earth, in blessing.

In summary, verse 1 shows in a fourfold manner the plans of blessing the LORD has devised for Israel:

1. He has compassion on them and
2. makes His choice come true;
3. He settles them in their own land given to them by Him; and
4. when strangers see the blessing thereof, they will want to be part of that blessed people. These strangers live among the Israelites and, like once people like Rahab and Ruth, will voluntarily join the house of Jacob.

### Isa 14:2-8 | The Tables Have Turned

*2 The peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive and will rule over their oppressors. 3 And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved, 4 that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,*

*"How the oppressor has ceased,  
[And how] fury has ceased!*

*5 "The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,  
The scepter of rulers*

*6 Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes,  
Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.*

*7 "The whole earth is at rest [and] is quiet;  
They break forth into shouts of joy.*

*8 "Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, [and]  
the cedars of Lebanon, [saying],*

*'Since you were laid low, no [tree] cutter comes up against us.'*

God will, in order to carry out His purpose toward His people, use the nations to bring His people to their dwelling place (verse 2). It is clear that what is said here did not happen in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, when a small remnant from Babylon returns to Jerusalem. That is a partial return, where the returned remnant remains under the power of the nations (Ezra 9:9; Neh 9:36).

The restoration that takes place in the end time, takes place in two steps. First we have the return of the two tribes who now 2,000 years ago rejected Christ and will go through the great tribulation. The two tribes will be restored after the discipline by the king of the North and by the appearance of Christ. Then the lost ten tribes (Deu 28:25; 32:26) will return to the land of Israel and be restored (Eze 37:21). The nations will do everything to bring these ten tribes back to the land of Israel in a brief time.

We see that whoever remains of the former oppressors after God's judgment on them will become "male servants and female servants" of the Israelites. The tables are turned. The oppressed are now the rulers and those who have ruled are now the prisoners (cf. 2Thes 1:6-7).

The joy over the fall of the harsh regime is great. Also great is the mockery that comes over the once mighty king of Babylon (verses 3-4). In the past we recognize this king in the person of Belshazzar (Dan 5:1), but prophetically we see in him the future ruler of Europe, referred to as the beast of the sea (Rev 13:1) and the little horn of Daniel 7 (Dan 7:8,20,24). We must well distinguish this person, referred to here as the oppressor because of his part in the persecution of the faithful remnant, from the antichrist, the wicked king of Israel, the beast coming up out of the earth (Rev 13:11).

Isaiah incites the singing of a mocking song, keeping alive the memory of the downfall of the king of Babylon. This mock song (verse 4) consists of four stanzas:

1. on earth: relief (verses 4-8);
2. in the realm of the dead (Sheol): amazement (verses 9-11);
3. in heaven: the ejection of satan, the power behind Babylon (verses 12-15);
4. on earth: judgment (verses 16-21).

This reversal of affairs is due to the LORD (verse 5). He has worked it, for He has “broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers”. The reason is that this disciplinary staff has not kept its measure and has constantly stricken and persecuted (verse 6). He has gone beyond the LORD’s will in his wrath and desire for destruction and has become a scourge to the nations. When his yoke is broken, the earth is at rest and there is joy everywhere; the cheers burst forth (verse 7).

Even the trees breathe as it were relieved (verse 8). The Babylonians had cut down large areas of forest of Lebanon, because they could use the wood for anything. Now they lie down felled themselves, powerless to climb Lebanon and cut trees.

### Isa 14:9-21 | The Fall of Satan

9 *“Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come;  
It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth;  
It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.*

10 *“They will all respond and say to you,  
‘Even you have been made weak as we,  
You have become like us.*

11 *‘Your pomp [and] the music of your harps  
Have been brought down to Sheol;  
Maggots are spread out [as your bed] beneath you  
And worms are your covering.’*

12 *“How you have fallen from heaven,  
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!  
You have been cut down to the earth,  
You who have weakened the nations!*

13 *“But you said in your heart,  
‘I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,  
And I will sit on the mount of assembly  
In the recesses of the north.*

14 *‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.’*

15 *“Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,*

*To the recesses of the pit.*

*16 "Those who see you will gaze at you,  
They will ponder over you, [saying],  
'Is this the man who made the earth tremble,  
Who shook kingdoms,*

*17 Who made the world like a wilderness  
And overthrew its cities,  
Who did not allow his prisoners to [go] home?'*

*18 "All the kings of the nations lie in glory,  
Each in his own tomb.*

*19 "But you have been cast out of your tomb  
Like a rejected branch,  
Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword,  
Who go down to the stones of the pit  
Like a trampled corpse.*

*20 "You will not be united with them in burial,  
Because you have ruined your country,  
You have slain your people.  
May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever.*

*21 "Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter  
Because of the iniquity of their fathers.  
They must not arise and take possession of the earth  
And fill the face of the world with cities."*

Then a new scene unfolds about the final fall of Babylon. We see the spirits of the slain rulers and people of Babylon in "Sheol" (verse 9). Sheol – Greek: *Hades* (Lk 16:23) –, is the place where the spirits of the dead go. These are the spirits of those who are lost. It is not hell (*gehenna*), but the realm of the dead.

Those who are already there greet the newcomer. There is commotion when they see who the newcomer is. They nudge each other and point at him who is coming. It is said to the newcomer that he was expected. Those who are in the realm of the dead know why they are there and are also aware that all those who have lived as they have, will also be there. Kings rise from their thrones. In their imagination they are still rulers. On earth

they would have risen from their thrones for fear and to flatter, now they do so mockingly.

This scene makes it clear that after death souls are fully aware of their situation. There is a lot of activity in the realm of the dead. They can talk to each other. There is also a vivid memory of life on earth (cf. Lk 16:23-31). There is no Scripture that teaches or even assumes an unconscious state or a soul-sleep.

Among those who are already in the realm of the dead, there is not the respect for the newcomer that was there on earth. They mock the king of Babylon (verse 10) as Israel earlier does in a mock song (verse 4). They shout interchangeably that he is now one of them. He is no longer above them. There is nothing left of the strength and haughtiness of the king of Babylon. He is as weak as they are.

His pomp has been thrown into the grave – not Sheol, as it says in verse 11. He is mockingly reminded of the beautiful music he enjoyed during his life (Dan 3:5). What he now hears is the ruthless sarcasm of his fellow-sufferers. In a sarcastic way they draw a comparison between the past on earth and the present in the realm of the dead. On earth he lay on luxurious couches and pillows, while he covered himself with beautiful blankets and bedspreads. This is different now. Maggots are now his bed and he lies under a blanket of worms.

They tell him how he saw himself as a god with his place in heaven, but that he has now fallen out of it (verse 12). It is over with his pride. He who has called himself “star of the morning, son of the dawn”, has lost all his glory. He has fallen, he who has “weakened the nations”.

The name “star of the morning” comes from the Latin *lucifer* meaning “light bearer”. In Hebrew, the word *hillel* is used, which means ‘bright’ or ‘lightening’. This is exactly the meaning of the Hebrew word *nahash* which indicates the serpent in its original state after its creation (Gen 3:1). Here in Isaiah the meaning ‘son of the dawn’ is added to this name. This is just a Hebrew poetic description for “star of the morning”. Both the ‘star of the morning’ and the ‘son of the dawn’ is a description of what we now know as the planet Venus.

If we combine the meanings, we are surprised to see 'bright morning star' as the original name of our opponent. It is a name that is used twice in the book of Revelation for the Lord Jesus (Rev 22:16,17). Can anyone other than Him bear that title? The Son of God gives a new dignity to every title that has been stained by the unfaithfulness of any creature. He does so by accepting that title Himself and showing and unfolding it in a perfect way.

When satan has come forth from the hand of the Creator, he is first the shining star of the morning. He is the leader of the "morning stars" who rejoiced (Job 38:4-7) at the creation of the earth. However, the bright morning is soon obscured by clouds, namely by the fall of the angelic prince. But God be praised that another "bright morning star" will once introduce the day of eternal rest and eternal glory on the basis of His work of salvation. Then He will sing the song of praise among His own (Psa 22:22b).

The foregoing makes it clear that although what is written in this verse 12 applies in the first place to the king of Babylon, we find behind it a description of satan (Lk 10:18; Rev 12:9). The attributes of the Lord Jesus originally granted to him he used for himself. That has made him satan, which means 'adversary'.

In the description of the judgment on the king of Tyre (Eze 28:11-19) we see behind the power of Tyre the same evil power as here behind the power of Babylon. That it goes beyond a description of the death of the king of Babylon here is also shown by the fact that the beast of Revelation 13 does not die an ordinary death like this, but is thrown alive into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).

Satan is the inspirer of this king, the founder of Babylon. Babylon is made by satan his seat to corrupt the world from there. The spirit of Babylon who instigated the building of the tower (Gen 11:1-9) is revived in Nebuchadnezzar, the first king of the world empire Babylon. This will be even more particularly the case in his last representative to whom this prophecy in its fullness relates, that is, the beast coming up out of the sea (Rev 13:1-10).

Proudness is the sin of satan (verses 13-14; cf. 1Tim 3:6). That sin has caused his fall. His heart has exalted itself. What he conceived in his heart was hidden from everyone, but not from God. Five times in these verses we read

his presumptuous intention: "I will." He saw himself as a rising star that went higher and higher. First to heaven to raise his throne there above the stars of God, which are His angels (verse 13). That exaltation served as a stepping stone to even higher, "above the heights of the clouds", to make himself like the Most High (verse 14).

Babylon defies God by wanting to be like Him and to rule over the ends of the earth. He thinks he can equal God. That endeavor will fail hopelessly and will be punished once and for all. We clearly see how behind the proud intention of the king of Babylon to make himself equal to God, that of the devil is hidden.

Satan has exalted himself and has been humiliated and will be humiliated even more. The complete contrast we see in the Lord Jesus. He is the Most High and He has humbled Himself and taken the form of a slave. He is exalted by God in heaven and will also be openly exalted on earth (Phil 2:5-11). In the way of the devil and in the way of the Lord Jesus we see the full truth of the words of the Lord Jesus: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk 14:11).

The fate of the king of Babylon is "Sheol", the realm of death, where everything is eternal misery and wail (verse 15). Instead of ascending above the highest clouds, he lies in "the recesses of the pit", the grave. By "those who see you" (verse 16) are not meant the spirits in the realm of the dead, but the people on earth. They express their amazement about the fall of the tyrant. It seems as if they cannot believe their eyes that this wretched man is the man for whom the entire world trembled with fear. Is that the man who trampled everything underfoot and broke down and kept everyone in an iron grip (verse 17)?

Other kings have had an honorable burial and rest in their own graves (verse 18). But the corpse of the king of Babylon – especially Belshazzar, the last king (Dan 5:30) – was contemptibly thrown away and has not been even near a grave (verse 19). So great is the disgust about him. Other corpses of defeated combatants have been thrown into graves and covered with stones. His body lies unburied and is trampled.

He suffers this fate because he has ruined his country and killed his people (verse 20). The reign of his house will be over. His house will perish inglo-

riously. In the realm of the dead, the lineage of evildoers, his offspring, will not be mentioned forever. There it will be over forever with all the glory of man.

His downfall is a warning example of downfall for all evildoers (verse 21). Children who follow their fathers in their iniquity will end up on a place of slaughter. They will fall and not arise again. It will be impossible for them to insure themselves again from the earth and build cities there to their own glory and pleasure.

### **Isa 14:22-23 | The Final Judgment on Babylon**

*22 "I will rise up against them," declares the LORD of hosts, "and will cut off from Babylon name and survivors, offspring and posterity," declares the LORD. 23 "I will also make it a possession for the hedgehog and swamps of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction," declares the LORD of hosts.*

The king of Babylon and his descendants rose up against the LORD. But the moment will come when "the LORD of hosts", that is He Who is far beyond all earthly and also heavenly powers, will rise up against them (verse 22). Those who are "them" are specified. They are "name and survivors [or: remnant]" of Babylon. All those who bear the royal name are exterminated. No one remains of the entire royal family. To underline its radical character it is said that this concerns both "offspring and posterity", or son and grandson, as it also can be translated. Anyone who could lay claim to the throne will perish. The dynasty simply ceases to exist.

He will make their abode uninhabitable for people, where no one will want to live except the unclean hedgehog (verse 23). He will wipe away the city itself "with the broom of destruction". This indicates that the city has turned to dust that can be wiped away. Everything finds its final fulfillment in the end time (Rev 18:21).

### **Isa 14:24-27 | Prophecy About Assyria**

*24 The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, 25 to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will*



*be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder. 26 This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. 27 For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate [it]? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"*

In verse 24, after the judgment on Babylon, we find the downfall of Assyria, after which even more realms are reviewed with which God will act. With this we move into the field of vision of the prophet to the area we know today as northern Iraq with even more countries of the near east, such as Syria and Iran. The fact that the fall of Babylon was first discussed is proof that the prophecy is related to the last days, because in ancient times Assyria fell before Babylon. After all, Babylon conquered and subdued Assyria. This happened in 612 BC with the fall of Nineveh.

More details can be found in the book of Nahum (cf. Mic 5:3-5). In the book of Daniel this enemy is also mentioned under the name 'the king of the North' (Dan 11:6-15,28,40). The Assyrian empire includes the peoples of northern Iraq to Pakistan, all Islamic countries today, which explains their intense hatred of Israel.

Assyria does not represent the beast or the antichrist, although the spirit that makes him a declared enemy of God's people is of the same satanic origin. Prophetically, the place of the Assyrians is taken by the king of the North, who in the future, together with several nations (Psa 83:5-8), will march against Jerusalem and be broken at Jerusalem (Dan 11:45).

God's dealings with Assyria begin with the establishment of the general declaration of the unshakeable intent of "the LORD" (Isa 46:10; Psa 33:10; Pro 21:30; Acts 2:23; 4:28). He is the Omniscient and the Almighty, He is "the LORD of hosts". By hosts are meant the stars, but also the angels, God's heavenly hosts, and also the hosts of Israel. He is also the Lord of all the hosts of the world. All those different hosts carry out His plan.

What He presupposes and decides, He also brings about, in Christ (2Cor 1:20). Man proposes but God disposes. It is not man who writes history, but God does. Not only does God know everything, but He also controls everything, so that everything happens exactly as He planned it (Isa 44:7). This is the sovereignty of God. He acts with each people according to His own purpose. Starting point is how a people has behaved toward His peo-

ple. He will repay all enmity, He will reward every good deed (Mt 25:31-46).

As said, the LORD will destroy Assyria in Israel, more accurately, on the mountains of Israel – “in My land, and ... on My mountains” (verse 25). As a result, the yoke and the burden laid upon Israel by Assyria will be removed from them. What an enlightenment that will give! In the counsel of the LORD what He will do with Assyria – breaking the yoke that this enemy has imposed on His people – is also included what He will do with all the nations connected with Assyria (verse 26).

Thus Isaiah 13-14 together form a general introduction to God’s counsel regarding the earth (Isaiah 15-23) to prepare it for the government of Christ. This is also shown by the fact that Babylon and Assyria are mentioned here under one ‘burden’ (Isa 13:1), unlike the other nations (Isaiah 14:28-23:18).

All nations will have to submit when He judges. The hand of the LORD which in Isaiah 1-12 is stretched out in judgment against Israel (Isa 5:25; 9:12,17,21; 10:4), is now stretched out against all nations (verse 26). This is worked out in Isaiah 13-23. Who will be able to stop Him when His hand is stretched out against them in judgment (verse 27)?

God is not like a man who makes plans, but who lacks the strength to carry them out. Perfect wisdom and absolute power are united in Him. This knowledge gives the believer complete peace with respect to his life. He can rely on that God for his whole life and everything that happens in his life.

### **Isa 14:28-32 | Prophecy About Philistia**

*28 In the year that King Ahaz died this oracle came:*

*29 “Do not rejoice, O Philistia, all of you,*

*Because the rod that struck you is broken;*

*For from the serpent’s root a viper will come out,*

*And its fruit will be a flying serpent.*

*30 “Those who are most helpless will eat,*

*And the needy will lie down in security;*

*I will destroy your root with famine,*

*And it will kill off your survivors.*

31 *“Wail, O gate; cry, O city;  
Melt away, O Philistia, all of you;  
For smoke comes from the north,  
And there is no straggler in his ranks.  
32 “How then will one answer the messengers of the nation?  
That the LORD has founded Zion,  
And the afflicted of His people will seek refuge in it.”*

The rest of this chapter and the following chapters describe the destruction carried out among the various nations by the LORD (Isa 10:23), indirectly by His rod the Assyrians (Isa 10:5,24). Its pre-fulfillment takes place by some kings of Assyria, successively Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser and finally Sargon. However, the final fulfillment will take place under the leadership of the king of the North (Dan 11:40-44). Successively the Philistines (Isaiah 14), Moab (Isaiah 15-16), Damascus (Isaiah 17), Israel (Isaiah 18), Egypt (Isaiah 19) and Cush (Isaiah 20) will be victims of Assyria's hunger for power. In part, after they are conquered, they will be made allies of Assyria.

It begins with the Philistines (verses 28-32). They live in the west, in the strip of land on the Mediterranean Sea, today's Gaza Strip. The “oracle” or “burden” about the Philistines comes to Isaiah in a new year of death, that of Ahaz (verse 28; cf. Isa 6:1). After the death of Ahaz, Hezekiah comes to the throne and he will defeat the Philistines completely (2Kgs 18:8). The joy of the Philistines is great at first, because “the staff” under which they first bowed is broken (verse 29).

As an explanation of this verse it is stated that “the rod” means the house of David. The grandfather of Ahaz, Uzziah, is the rod that struck them (2Chr 26:6). As a result of the unfaithfulness of the house of David and Judah, their rod was broken and they lost their dominion over the Philistines. The Philistines are happy about this. However, their joy will disappear, because from the root of the serpent (Ahaz) a viper (Hezekiah) will emerge and eventually the Messiah. Under His blessed reign, the “most helpless” and “the needy” will be pastured and secure (verse 30). At His coming the Messiah will use Israel (Jer 51:20-23) to destroy the Philistines (Isa 11:14; cf. Zep 2:4).

For Judah this should be a warning not to connect with the Philistines and not to respond to requests to do so in order to be stronger together against Assyria. Judah, here called “the firstborn” [“those who are most helpless” is literally “the firstborn of the helpless”], will also be humiliated. Of the firstborn, those to whom the double part of the blessing has been promised (Deu 21:17), only “helpless” and “needy” will remain. But these poor and vulnerable will be shepherded and safe. Also from Philistia will remain something after the destruction, “your root” and “your remnant”. But the “carrot” will die of hunger and the “remnant” will be killed by Christ’s army (Isa 11:14).

Philistia is called to wail and to cry (verse 31). The “gate” is the entrance to the city. There the enemy comes first. The gate, that is all who keep watch there, will be unable to resist. There is only mourning. The “city” will then be captured, because of which the inhabitants will cry out. All of Philistia will melt away with fear because of what happens to the city. All resistance is broken.

The enemy comes “from the north” as a cloud of “smoke”. This evokes the picture of an all-consuming fire coming at great speed. There are no openings in the ranks of the enemy. They are inviolable and overcome any opposition without suffering any losses themselves. The description fits with the advance of the king of the North to Egypt, invading and exterminating several countries (Dan 11:40-43). It is plausible that he starts with Philistia.

Philistia has sent messengers to Zion to enter into an alliance with Judah in order to join forces against the advancing Assyrians (verse 32). But they must be answered that the LORD has founded Zion and that therefore Judah does not need the help of Philistia at all. The LORD Himself will be able to protect His wretched people.

This will become even more evident in the future and will be a testimony for the Name of the LORD. Against the downfall of the surrounding nations who were hostile to Israel and who have always set out to destroy God’s people and land, stands the foundation of Zion.

Messengers from all nations, including Philistia, will get an answer to the question how it is possible that such a small and oppressed and plagued people have such a glorious end. The answer is that the LORD did it. That

is also the guarantee that the wretched of His people, those who have suffered so much, have now found a definitive refuge there. There need be no more fear of a new threat of danger.

Zion was founded by the LORD in His grace when He made David king. Zion is the symbol of the mercy and grace of God (cf. Heb 12:22). In that grace, represented in Zion, the God-fearing poor of God's people will rest. They have done that in the past, they will do that in the future. We may do that in the present.

## Isaiah 15

### **Introduction**

Isaiah 15-16 form a whole and contain “the oracle [or: burden] of Moab” (Isa 15:1). A more complete description of the judgment on Moab can be found in Jeremiah 48. There we see that there is a restoration for Moab in the end time (Jer 48:47). Remarkably, the sentences in Jeremiah are often the same as the sentences in Isaiah. Jeremiah knows and uses the book of Isaiah. This does not mean that he copies, but that he is led by the Spirit to represent it in the same way.

Moab is located east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan. It corresponds to the present-day country of Jordan. It is a people related to Israel, for Lot, the ancestor of Moab, is a cousin of Abraham (Gen 12:5). Moab has its origins in the incest that Lot commits with his eldest daughter (Gen 19:37). Moab has always been hostile toward Israel. They once hired a wicked prophet to curse Israel (Num 22:4-6). Also, during the wilderness journey of Israel, Moabite women seduced the men of Israel (Num 31:15-17). During the time of the judges, Moab oppressed Israel for eighteen years (Jdg 3:12-14).

In their kinship with God’s people, Moab represents Christians who profess with their mouths that they are Christians but have not converted and are not born of God. Such Christians, also called nominal Christians, will always persecute the true Christian (cf. Gal 4:29), although they may sometimes appear friendly.

The description of “the burden of Moab” has a special poetic style. The inspired poet-prophet presents to us the judgment on Moab in visual language, in which, in his visual language, he often outlines the situation in short sentences. Not only does he describe the situation in such a way that we perceive it with our eyes, as it were, but he also appeals to our feelings. The reader’s heart is deeply affected by the anxious crying of those who have been robbed and are on the run.

We are reminded of the righteousness of the judgment. The God-fearing must always be on God’s side when He exercises His judgments in righ-

teousness. However, the reader is not forbidden to mourn the consequences of the sins of men. We therefore see here that the inspired page is wet from the tears of the prophet. Jeremiah weeps over Judah (Jer 9:1), but Isaiah weeps over Moab! The reason is that the faithful remnant of Israel will flee to Moab during the great tribulation (Isa 16:4).

The prophecy of Moab consists of three sections, with a heading (Isa 15:1a) and an epilogue (Isa 16:13-14). The first section (Isa 15:1b-9) and the third section (Isa 16:6-12) are a lamentation about Moab; the middle second section is a call to Moab and, to our surprise, also to Judah (Isa 16:1-5).

### Isa 15:1 | Devastation of Moab

*1 The oracle concerning Moab.*

*Surely in a night Ar of Moab is devastated [and] ruined;*

*Surely in a night Kir of Moab is devastated [and] ruined.*

As always in prophecy, Isaiah represents an event that will take place in the future, as if it were taking place in the present. He sees how in the night Moab is destroyed, unseen, suddenly and quickly (verse 1). “Ar of Moab” is the capital of Moab; “Kir of Moab” is the castle close to this city. Both have not been able to offer any protection, but are destroyed in one night.

The enemy is Assyria who will destroy Moab both in the days of Isaiah and in the distant future. After Philistia it is Moab’s turn to be exterminated by the invasion of the king of the North.

### Isa 15:2-4 | Moab Plunged In Mourning

*2 They have gone up to the temple and [to] Dibon, [even] to the high places to weep.*

*Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba;*

*Everyone’s head is bald [and] every beard is cut off.*

*3 In their streets they have girded themselves with sackcloth;*

*On their housetops and in their squares*

*Everyone is wailing, dissolved in tears.*

*4 Heshbon and Elealeh also cry out,*

*Their voice is heard all the way to Jahaz;*

*Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud;*

| *His soul trembles within him.*

To seek help from the gods, the Moabites go up to the heights, to their idol temple (verse 2a). There they wail over the fallen cities of Nebo and Medeba. They express their mourning over the popular disaster not only with their mouths by lamenting, but also by external signs such as the shaving of the head and the shaving of the beard (verse 2b). These mourning customs are general, “everyone’s head” and “every beard”. Their clothing also shows their mourning (verse 3). In all places, on the street, on the housetops, in the squares, everywhere their mourning can be seen and heard.

The visit to the idols on the heights (verse 2) did not bring any relief to their grief, they “dissolved in tears” (verse 3b). In cities like Heshbon and Elealeh they cry out (verse 4). The cries are heard into distant Jahaz. All of Moab trembles and even the warriors are filled with fear and have no courage to fight.

### **Isa 15:5-9 | On the Run**

*5 My heart cries out for Moab;  
His fugitives are as far as Zoar [and] Eglath-shelishiyah,  
For they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping;  
Surely on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of distress over [their] ruin.  
6 For the waters of Nimrim are desolate.  
Surely the grass is withered, the tender grass died out,  
There is no green thing.  
7 Therefore the abundance [which] they have acquired and stored up  
They carry off over the brook of Arabim.  
8 For the cry of distress has gone around the territory of Moab,  
Its wail [goes] as far as Eglaim and its wailing even to Beer-elim.  
9 For the waters of Dimon are full of blood;  
Surely I will bring added [woes] upon Dimon,  
A lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon the remnant of the land.*

Isaiah mourns intensely over the downfall of Moab (verse 5). His heart cries out. Here we see that a prophecy in which judgment is foretold on an enemy people deeply touches the feelings of the prophet (Isa 16:9; 21:3,4;



22:4; cf. Jer 9:1). Like God, Isaiah has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Eze 18:23,32).

Pronouncing a message on behalf of God is not a mechanical matter. The servant who utters the message is fully involved. The special thing here is that we are dealing with a heathen people. Isaiah is seized by pity for what happens to these people. If we have to pass on a message of judgment, either in the gospel or for God's people, this should not happen without feeling.

In verses 5-9 Isaiah describes Moab's flight from the enemy. "Zoar" is a fortress in the south. "Eglath-shelishiyah" is a well-known place (Jer 48:34). The meaning of the name is 'a heifer of three years old'. This gives the picture that Moab is a heifer in the power of its life that has not yet been under a yoke. To this not yet conquered fortress Moab's fugitives take refuge from the enemy from the north.

Then Isaiah follows in spirit the fugitives. They are chased by the enemy to the south. First they have climbed the slope to Luhith in the middle of the country. Then they descended again to Horonaim, wailing over the destruction of the country.

The enemy has destroyed everything by dampening the waters of Nimrim with the result that nothing grows there anymore (verse 6). They also spared nothing in their advance, but trampled everything with their feet. The few possessions the Moabites were able to take with them they carry off over the brook of Arabim (verse 7) to take refuge in the area of Edom.

Everywhere in Moab there is loud and desperate wailing (verse 8). The cries of the Moabites has gone around the whole country. From Eglaim to Beer-elim means from the far north of Moab to the far south, as in Israel from Dan to Berseba (Jdg 20:1). There is no place where it does not penetrate.

And no matter how much blood has flowed, it will get worse (verse 9). To illustrate this, the prophet changes the name of the city of Dibon to Dimon, a word related to the word blood. In Hebrew it reads: 'The city of blood is full of blood.' Even the fugitives who are a remnant will not escape the judgment that the LORD has decided and executed over them.

## Isaiah 16

### **Isa 16:1 | Call to Moab**

*1 Send the [tribute] lamb to the ruler of the land,  
From Sela by way of the wilderness to the mountain of the daughter of Zion.*

This chapter is a direct sequel to the previous one and forms a whole with it. In view of the coming tribulation Isaiah calls Moab to submit to Judah (verse 1). In the past, Moab has been subject to Israel (2Sam 8:2) and has had to pay a tribute of lambs and wool, but has escaped from Israel's power (2Kgs 3:4-5).

In fact, this means that Moab is asked to choose to stand on the side of the believing Israelites at the time of the great tribulation. In practical terms, this means that they are called upon to receive the fleeing believing remnant of Israel (verse 4; Mt 24:16). Those who answer this call will be rewarded before the throne of Christ (Mt 25:31-40). Everything they have done to these believing Israelites, they have done to Christ Himself, without knowing it.

As a sign of their choice to stand at the side of Israel, Moab is said to send lambs again. He should not send them to Samaria now, but "to the mountain of the daughter of Zion", which is the temple mountain in Jerusalem. This way of doing things will be an outcome for Moab. Moab's need, just like other peoples in the area, is caused by the invasion of the king of the North. They will find protection and security in Jerusalem as compensation for the tribute paid.

*Sela* is Hebrew for the Greek *Petra*, which means rock. Petra is located in Edom, south of Moab. There the fugitives fled from the north of Moab. The escape route from north to south is described in the previous chapter.

### **Isa 16:2-3 | On the Run to Jerusalem**

*2 Then, like fleeing birds [or] scattered nestlings,  
The daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the Arnon.  
3 "Give [us] advice, make a decision;*

*Cast your shadow like night at high noon;  
Hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive.*

Then the prophet sees how the Moabites flee, toward Jerusalem, chased by the enemy (verse 2). The picture is that of birds chased from their nest, causing their young to fly around without a resting place. The time will come when the Moabites will be driven from their homes and will need protection. This is offered to them in verse 1 with the associated condition.

In verse 3 both Judah and Moab are addressed to take in each other's fugitives. Judah has to flee at the time of the great tribulation because of the persecution by the antichrist, while Moab has to flee to Israel because of the invasion of the king of the North. They have to cast "at high noon" their "shadow like night". They have to offer protection by hiding the fugitives from the enemy in the heat of the day, i.e. when the persecution is most intense, like a rock provides a cooling shadow in the middle of the day. Betrayal of the hiding place of the outcasts is forbidden.

#### **Isa 16:4-5 | Request for Protection**

*4 "Let the outcasts of Moab stay with you;  
Be a hiding place to them from the destroyer."  
For the extortioner has come to an end, destruction has ceased,  
Oppressors have completely [disappeared] from the land.  
5 A throne will even be established in lovingkindness,  
And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David;  
Moreover, he will seek justice  
And be prompt in righteousness.*

Here Moab is summoned to receive the outcasts of Judah [according to another translation: "My outcasts, as for Moab", footnote NASB] (verse 4). The mountains of which the Lord Jesus speaks in His end time speech (Mt 24:16) may be those of Moab. There the outcasts of Judah will be safe "from the destroyer", the king of the North. No matter how much the destroyer will rage, he will eventually come to his end in Judah.

This means that Isaiah's main concern here is the end time, a thought that is in line with what has already been mentioned in this book (Isa 14:32). Verse 5 confirms this. When the extortioner has been judged, the destruc-

tion is over and the oppressors have been wiped out (verse 4b), the Messiah will sit on His throne. The “judge” who sits on the throne is none other than the Lord Jesus and it can be about nothing but His reign in the end time.

Just before He returns to judge the enemies of His people, many Judeans will flee and therewith fulfill His word. What David does with his father and mother while he is fleeing from Saul is a foreshadowing of this (1Sam 22:3-4; cf. Jer 40:11-12). God also calls Moab “My washbowl” (Psa 60:8a; 108:9a), which indicates that Moab is the place where He will cleanse and purify the remnant as in a washbowl.

When that process is completed, they will return to Judah as God’s warriors to help with the deliverance of Judah and Jerusalem. When the anti-Christian powers have been defeated, the Son of David will sit on the throne. He will restore and maintain justice and righteousness.

### **Isa 16:6-12 | Moab Destroyed**

*6 We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride;  
[Even] of his arrogance, pride, and fury;  
His idle boasts are false.*

*7 Therefore Moab will wail; everyone of Moab will wail.  
You will moan for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth  
As those who are utterly stricken.*

*8 For the fields of Heshbon have withered, the vines of Sibmah [as well];  
The lords of the nations have trampled down its choice clusters  
Which reached as far as Jazer [and] wandered to the deserts;  
Its tendrils spread themselves out [and] passed over the sea.*

*9 Therefore I will weep bitterly for Jazer, for the vine of Sibmah;  
I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh;  
For the shouting over your summer fruits and your harvest has fallen away.*

*10 Gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field;  
In the vineyards also there will be no cries of joy or jubilant shouting,  
No treader treads out wine in the presses,  
[For] I have made the shouting to cease.*

*11 Therefore my heart intones like a harp for Moab  
And my inward feelings for Kir-hareseth.*

*12 So it will come about when Moab presents himself,  
When he wearies himself upon [his] high place  
And comes to his sanctuary to pray,  
That he will not prevail.*

After advising Moab to submit to Zion and be a refuge for the outcasts of Judah, Isaiah returns to the characteristic attitude of Moab. That attitude is one of pride, arrogance, fury and idle boasts (verse 6; Jer 48:29-30). This attitude causes the land to be destroyed and Moab to wail and moan about his fate (verses 7-8; cf. Pro 16:18). Isaiah sees it before him. It seizes him.

Where there should be cheering for joy – the vine is the symbol of it – is bitterly weeping (verses 9-10). At the end of verse 10 we suddenly hear the LORD speaking in the speaking of Isaiah. He says that He has made the shouting of joy to cease. The LORD is at work in what happens to Moab.

This brings Isaiah to a new expression of grief over Moab (verse 11). The tragedy of Moab is that he does not resort to God, but to his idols (verse 12). He makes every effort to get any help in the house of his idol. Of course there is no salvation there. His going to the sanctuary of his god and the prayer to his god are totally useless.

### **Isa 16:13-14 | Short-Term Judgment**

*13 This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab. 14 But now the LORD speaks, saying, "Within three years, as a hired man would count them, the glory of Moab will be degraded along with all [his] great population, and [his] remnant will be very small [and] impotent."*

What Isaiah prophesied about Moab (verse 13) is in line with prophecies that were made about this people "earlier" (Num 24:17). It will all be fulfilled in the future.

Also for the short term Isaiah has a prophecy: a judgment will come within three years (verse 14). That period is counted "as a hired man would count them". This means that it will be after exactly three years, because a hired man will not work a day longer than the agreed period. Although we do not know very well how that judgment was carried out, it certainly happened, because God has declared it. In the end time after the invasion of

Assyria Moab will be judged again by the hands of the then restored Israel (Isa 11:14).

However, it is clear that there is a significant difference between the fate of Philistia (Isaiah 14) and the fate of Moab (Isaiah 15-16). There will be no remnant of Philistia in the realm of peace, whereas there will be a remnant of Moab. This is because at the time of the great tribulation Moab took in fugitives from Israel, the believing remnant (cf. Mt 25:31-40).

## Isaiah 17

### Introduction

The prophecies in this chapter are about two nations north of Judah: Damascus (Syria) and Ephraim (the ten tribes realm). These two are described at the same time because they formed an alliance (Isa 7:1). It is a biblical principle that he who has fellowship with the sins of someone also shares in the judgment on those sins (Rev 18:4). For the believing remnant in the future, this is a warning not to put their trust in people, that is, in Babylon, the restored Roman Empire, Europe.

### Isa 17:1-3 | Prophecy About Damascus

*1 The oracle concerning Damascus.*

*"Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city  
And will become a fallen ruin.*

*2 "The cities of Aroer are forsaken;  
They will be for flocks to lie down in,  
And there will be no one to frighten [them].*

*3 "The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim,  
And sovereignty from Damascus  
And the remnant of Aram;  
They will be like the glory of the sons of Israel,"  
Declares the LORD of hosts.*

These verses give a short "burden of Damascus" (verse 1). The judgment, again carried out by Assyria, is not only on Damascus, the capital of Aram or Syria, but also on "the cities of Aroer" (verse 2). The judgment will result in the whole area being completely deserted, so that the flocks will be able to lie down there, without being frightened.

In the days of Isaiah Damascus is connected with the ten tribes. This is expressed in verse 3 in two ways: "Ephraim" – "Damascus" and "Aram" (i.e. the Syrians) – "the sons of Israel". A common intention implies a common fate (Isa 7:1,4). Just as "the glory of the sons of Israel", which was visible

in the fortified cities, has vanished, so will ally Syria. Because of that connection, the judgment on Ephraim follows directly in the following verses.

### **Isa 17:4-6 | Judgment on Ephraim**

*4 Now in that day the glory of Jacob will fade,  
And the fatness of his flesh will become lean.  
5 It will be even like the reaper gathering the standing grain,  
As his arm harvests the ears,  
Or it will be like one gleaning ears of grain  
In the valley of Rephaim.  
6 Yet gleanings will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree,  
Two [or] three olives on the topmost bough,  
Four [or] five on the branches of a fruitful tree,  
Declares the LORD, the God of Israel.*

After the judgment on Israel's ally Syria, Isaiah speaks about the judgment that Assyria will bring on Israel, or Ephraim (2Kgs 15:29). This section is the first of three sections beginning with "in that day" (verse 4). The other two sections are verses 7-8 and verses 9-11. This expression almost always refers to the end time.

All the glory of Ephraim, "the glory of Jacob", will fade. "The fatness of his flesh" refers to wealth and prosperity. Ephraim has a prosperous time under King Jeroboam II, but that prosperity will disappear. The people will become lean. Prophetically, it is about the destruction of the north of Israel at the time of the invasion of the king of the North.

The destruction is drawn in three paintings. The first is the picture of a fat person who is now emaciated and literally skin and bones, from whom all the fatness of the flesh has shrunk. The fatness speaks of prosperity. After the judgment (verse 5) poverty will remain (verse 6; Lev 19:9; Deu 24:19-22).

The second picture is that of the grain harvest. After the harvest, the left-overs are picked up by the poor. What is collected is very little. The very fertile valley Rephaim (Jos 15:8) is located near Jerusalem, on its south-western side.



The third picture is that of the olive harvest. Olives are harvested by picking them by hand and picking the fallen fruit. Then the tree is shaken, which is done by beating the tree with sticks (a picture of judgment). After harvesting, you can count the rest of the olives left on the fingers of one hand.

The deeper meaning of the gleaning is that after the judgment on the population only a little remnant remains. This is what “the LORD, the God of Israel” declares. This Name reminds us that the God of the promises made to the patriarchs has a purpose that goes beyond the temporary judgments.

### **Isa 17:7-8 | Conversion of a Remnant**

*7 In that day man will have regard for his Maker*

*And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel.*

*8 He will not have regard for the altars, the work of his hands,*

*Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made,*

*Even the Asherim and incense stands.*

For the gleaning, which is the remnant of verse 6, there is hope. This connects us again in a direct way to the distant future, the end time. This remnant will be like a man who, after much deviation, turns his gaze again to the LORD (verse 7). That will happen in its fullness when the Lord Jesus comes back and they will see Him “whom they have pierced” (Zec 12:10). That is repentance.

We see it with the prodigal son who, when he is with the swine in the deepest misery, comes “to his senses” and thinks of his father again (Lk 15:16-18). He turns his back on his life in sin and goes to his father. A real return goes hand in hand with giving up idolatry (verse 8). Through the terror and the suffering of war, they will see that idols do not help. These idols are ‘made in Israel’ (Isa 2:8) and find their climax in the image of the beast (Rev 13:14-15).

The contrast between “his Maker” (verse 7) and “that which his fingers have made” (verse 8) is striking. What the LORD has made, His people, remains; what man has made, his idol, shall perish. He will no longer look to it. How foolish man is to enter into a relationship with a god who is the work of his own hands. In our time we recognize this in modern theology.

### Isa 17:9-11 | Judgment on the Mass

*9 In that day their strong cities will be like forsaken places in the forest,  
Or like branches which they abandoned before the sons of Israel;  
And the land will be a desolation.*

*10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation  
And have not remembered the rock of your refuge.  
Therefore you plant delightful plants  
And set them with vine slips of a strange [god].*

*11 In the day that you plant [it] you carefully fence [it] in,  
And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom;  
[But] the harvest will [be] a heap  
In a day of sickliness and incurable pain.*

In these verses we see that while there is hope for a remnant, judgment will come on the apostate mass because they have forgotten the God of their salvation. Their strong cities, which they see as a fortress and in which they feel safe, will not be able to protect them from the enemy (verse 9). The cities will be overpowered by the king of the North and the inhabitants will be expelled. The cities will be deserted and become a desolation.

They have planted “delightful plants” – freely translated as ‘imported cuttings’ (verse 10). In a literal sense, this can refer to the transfer of, for example, vines from another country. In a spiritual sense it means that they have adopted the norms and values of heathen peoples and put their trust in them. For their prosperity they have adopted methods (altars) from the surrounding peoples and put their trust in their power, while ignoring God. If God is forgotten, the result is barrenness and fruitlessness. Whoever trusts in a human rock and forgets God as “the rock” of his “refuge”, is deceived. But “those who trust in the LORD are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever” (Psa 125:1).

The same goes for the results of our work. There may still be so much activity, there will be no lasting fruit if we forget that we depend on Him for all good. If we lose sight of the Source of our strength, the Rock of our refuge or strength, we bring “sickliness and incurable pain” upon ourselves (verse 11). In the “incurable pain” we can see the remorse that we did not

involve Him in our plans, while we knew well to Whom we had to go. It is the regret afterward of an irreversible decision.

In the future God will have to judge them. That will happen by bringing this “day of sickness and incurable pain” over His people, which happens when the hostile king of the North enters Israel like a dyke breakthrough. We see that in the following verses.

### **Isa 17:12-14 | The Fate of the Plunderers**

*12 Alas, the uproar of many peoples  
Who roar like the roaring of the seas,  
And the rumbling of nations  
Who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!  
13 The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters,  
But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away,  
And be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind,  
Or like whirling dust before a gale.  
14 At evening time, behold, [there is] terror!  
Before morning they are no more.  
Such [will be] the portion of those who plunder us  
And the lot of those who pillage us.*

These verses indicate the end time again. “The uproar of many peoples” is presented as “the roaring of the seas” (verse 12; cf. Isa 57:20; Rev 17:15). “The rumbling of nations” is presented as “the rumbling of mighty waters”. Here we see how God uses His control over nature to portray His control over history. This is about the “uproar of many peoples” who will fight against Israel, but fundamentally “take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed” (Psa 2:1-2).

The nullity of all those hostile powers appears when He “rebukes” them (verse 13). Then they flee far away as “chaff” that is “chased ... in the mountains before the wind” and as “whirling dust before a gale”. When He rises, they disappear.

“At evening time”, at the end of a day of advance, there is horror when the LORD appears and defeats the enemy once and for all (verse 14). “Before the morning” dawns of the day on which the enemy wants to attack, “they

are no more". Through a sudden intervention of the LORD the enemy has come to his end (Isa 37:36-38). Both in the days of Hezekiah and in the end time, his dream of the dawn of a glorious morning will fade away.

Earlier it is mainly about Assyria itself (Isa 14:22-24); here (verses 12-14) it is about the alliance of many peoples led by North Arab and islamic (possibly shiite) countries, with behind them the power of Russia (Gog and Magog). It is about the Assyrian armies and their allies plundering and robbing Judah, "us". Prophetically, we find this event in the book of Daniel (Dan 11:45a).

When Jerusalem is surrounded by the nations, night threatens to fall over the city. But then the salvation of the LORD will come and "it will come about that at evening time there will be light" (Zec 14:7). The night will not fall over the city; the threatening darkness will flee from before Him Whose feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. Then it will always be light, because the "sun of righteousness" has appeared (Mal 4:2). This is how it happened in the life of their ancestor Jacob, after he had his time of 'great tribulation': "Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Peniel" (Gen 32:31).

## Isaiah 18

### Introduction

This is not a simple chapter. But it does not have to scare us to try to discover the meaning of the prophecy. In any case, it will keep us humble and make us aware that we depend on the enlightenment of God's Spirit for the explanation.

If we encounter difficulties in the examination of the prophetic word, it may give us an extra incentive to ask the Lord to give us clarity. Then He will always give us clarity as to what extent we can grasp and which is useful for the building up of our life of faith. It is not a question of increasing our intellectual knowledge of future events, but that our hearts will be more directed toward Him. A difficulty in the explanation of prophecy, has that effect when our heart is directed toward Him. At the same time, it will make us cautious to make overly firm claims in certain cases.

This chapter is a continuation of Isaiah 17. It does not begin with the word "burden" (or: oracle) but with the word "alas" which is also mentioned in the previous chapter (Isa 17:12), which indicates a continuation. In Isaiah 17 it is about the destruction of Ephraim by the king of the North; in this chapter it is about the destruction of Israel, in this case especially Judah, by the same king of the North. This chapter explains the position of Judah at the time of the attack of the king of the North.

### Isa 18:1 | The Land Beyond the Rivers of Cush

*1 Alas, oh land of whirring wings  
Which lies beyond the rivers of Cush,*

Remarkable is that the chapter does not start with a new 'burden', but with an "alas" (verse 1). An 'alas' [in other translations: 'woe'] is an announcement of a message of judgment. As noted above, this seems to indicate that it is a direct continuation of the previous chapter (Isa 17:12-14), where an 'alas' (Isa 17:12) is pronounced over the raging of the nations.

The first characteristic of the land about which Isaiah is now going to prophesy is found in the indication that it is a land of “whirring wings” or that it is “shadowing with wings” (Darby Translation). A wing refers like shadow to protection (Rth 2:12; Psa 17:8; 36:7; 57:1b). Only this is not the wing or protection of the LORD. It is a mighty land characterized by the sound of flying creatures. Can we think of an air force? The expression whirring wings is also connected to the sound of a locust swarm. Cush is a land where many locust infestations occur.

The description then speaks of a land “which lies beyond the rivers of Cush” (Gen 10:6; cf. Zep 3:10). This does not only mean Ethiopia. Cush included today’s southern Egypt, Sudan and northern Ethiopia. The land lies “beyond the rivers” (plural). These rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates. The Cushites can also be found in Mesopotamia, near the Euphrates and the Tigris.

It also says that it is a land “beyond” those two rivers. This does not necessarily mean that it is directly across, because ‘beyond’ can also be translated as ‘along’. The Hebrew word *me-eber* also means ‘to beyond’. Then it can also be further away than just next to it. It is a different land than the lands and peoples spoken of in the prophecies, which are close to Israel. This country must be far away from Israel.

### Isa 18:2 | Envoys to Israel

*2 Which sends envoys by the sea,  
Even in papyrus vessels on the surface of the waters.  
Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth,  
To a people feared far and wide,  
A powerful and oppressive nation  
Whose land the rivers divide.*

That land sends “envoys by the sea” – meaning that the land is not nearby – “to a nation tall and smooth” or “a nation scattered and ravaged [or: plucked]” (verse 2). This last translation corresponds exactly with the conclusion of the previous chapter. Israel is that scattered and plucked nation. Its enemies have taken it out of its land and plucked it bare. It is a “feared” people, in the sense of marvelous or formidable, because it has a marvel-

ous and formidable God Who has a marvelous plan with His people. The purpose of the envoys seems to be to persuade Judah to make an alliance with him against Assyria.

The envoys, “swift messengers” uses “papyrus vessels” (cf. Job 9:26a). They are “swift” messengers because time is running out for that land. Judah seems to be a good ally, because it has a strong army and a reputation that instils fear. Egypt, Canaan and the surrounding peoples have experienced it in the past. The fact that it must be Judah is also clear from the alternative Darby Translation: “A nation of measure, measure and of treading down.” God has given them His laws, the *Torah*, with all kinds of measurements.

It is also a people “of treading down” because it has been treaded down many times in its history. It is a land which “the rivers divide” or “the rivers have spoiled”, which means that Israel has been robbed of its freedom many times by lands on its rivers. We can think of Assyria (Isa 8:7; 17:12).

The faraway land beyond the rivers is making an effort to make an alliance with the Jews and it all seems to succeed. If the historical explanation of this section is difficult, the prophetic explanation seems clearer. A comparison with other parts of the Bible suggests – seen from the perspective of Isaiah – that this distant land may be the future restored Roman Empire, Europe with allies. The prophet Daniel speaks of a firm covenant with the many and the wing of abominations (Dan 9:27) and the honoring by the antichrist of a god of fortresses, i.e. a strong military power (Dan 11:38).

### Isa 18:3 | Israel Returned to His Land

*3 All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth,  
As soon as a standard is raised on the mountains, you will see [it],  
And as soon as the trumpet is blown, you will hear [it].*

After the description in verses 1-2 comes the call to “all inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth” to attentively “see” and “hear” everything that this nation from the distant land does to Israel (verse 3). They will succeed in bringing Israel into their land under their own standard or flag. The fact that the standard is raised on the mountains means that the state

of Israel is going to occupy a prominent position in the world. We can already see this now.

They will also blow the trumpet of freedom. This happened in 1948 before the eyes of the entire world. This is only a pre-fulfillment to what else is going to happen (Eze 37:1-28). All the dwellers on earth will testify that the future belongs to Israel (cf. Isa 11:12).

### **Isa 18:4 | The LORD Looks Quietly**

*4 For thus the LORD has told me,  
"I will look from My dwelling place quietly  
Like dazzling heat in the sunshine,  
Like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."*

Then we read in this verse what the LORD will do during all the activities of the distant people and of His people. He will quietly watch all that hustle and bustle, without interfering. He will keep quiet, it does not have His blessing. These are activities in which He is not involved. That does not mean that everything is outside of Him.

Although He Himself has no active part in it, He allows all these actions to happen. He allows it because it fits into His plan. It happens in His providence. However, in the background He is "like dazzling heat in the sunshine" and "like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest" preparing His people for the blessing of the land.

Prophetically this points at the first phase of Israel's restoration. Compare the vision of the valley with the bones (Eze 37:1-10). The scattered bones are restored to bodies, but they are still without spirit, not yet alive. Thus Israel is now back in the land, but without spiritual life.

The messengers of the distant land (cf. Isa 39:1-8) may be in a hurry, the LORD is not. That is why Israel should not rush to connect with that land, as if it offered them some strength against the advancing enemy. Seeking support from people will always result in disappointment (Isa 20:5-6; Psa 118:8-9). That is what the unbelieving Israel will experience in the end time. It will suffer badly, despite all the covenants and promised help.



**Isa 18:5-6 | The LORD Is Going to Act**

*5 For before the harvest, as soon as the bud blossoms  
 And the flower becomes a ripening grape,  
 Then He will cut off the sprigs with pruning knives  
 And remove [and] cut away the spreading branches.  
 6 They will be left together for mountain birds of prey,  
 And for the beasts of the earth;  
 And the birds of prey will spend the summer [feeding] on them,  
 And all the beasts of the earth will spend harvest time on them.*

Then comes the moment He goes to work (verse 5). When all efforts seem successful and the goal is almost reached, the LORD will suddenly give free rein to all the anger of the surrounding peoples toward Israel. The pruning knife that the LORD is going to use is Assyria or the king of the North (Dan 11:6-15,28,40). Two third of Israel will be pruned away (Zec 13:8).

In the end, the friendly plan of the distant people, which seemed to be an enormous success, will fail. Their army will arrive in Israel too late. The people of Israel who have relied in unbelief on the protective power of this faraway land will become prey to the nations around them who are presented as predators (verse 6). But this is not the end.

The LORD presents Himself as the only reliable Refuge. His people must learn to look to Him. He remains quiet, has everything under control, while the circumstances develop until the right time has come to intervene. This time is figuratively referred to as the time “before the harvest”. Then He will prune the enemies of Israel, limit them in their power, and make their territory a dwelling place for the predators (verses 5-6). He will destroy the enemies, that is the king of the North or Assyria in the end time, together with the false allies, that is Babylon, or the restored Roman Empire, or the united Europe (Dan 2:45; 11:45).

This is the fate of any people who turn against God’s people, which is the faithful remnant. It teaches us that we can quietly wait for God’s time to intervene for our benefit. In all our faith exercises, we may be assured that everything is under His absolute control. We face trials and difficulties so

that we will cast ourselves upon God in simple and unshakable dependence.

### **Isa 18:7 | A Gift of Homage for the LORD**

*7 At that time a gift of homage will be brought to the LORD of hosts  
From a people tall and smooth,  
Even from a people feared far and wide,  
A powerful and oppressive nation,  
Whose land the rivers divide —  
To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, [even] Mount Zion.*

If the LORD has thus acted in favor of His people, this people will honor Him in the place He has given for this purpose: the temple on mount Zion. After the vine is pruned, after the destruction of Israel by the king of the North, a small remnant survived the slaughter. Those who make up this small remnant will repent and come to full faith. In the realm of peace, they will thank and honor the LORD through gifts that they will bring to Mount Zion, “the place of the name of the LORD of hosts”.

In this verse we see the beginning of the realm of peace, while verses 1-2 show us the establishment of the state of Israel in unbelief. Between the time leading up to the establishment of the state of Israel and the establishment of the kingdom of peace lies the present time in which the final establishment of the state of Israel in unbelief took place on May 15, 1948.

In retrospect, in the twenty-first century, this is not difficult for us to recognize. But let us keep in mind that believers already gave this explanation at the beginning of the nineteenth century. At that time there was no question of the events now confirming the explanation of that time. Circumstances seemed to point to the opposite of the explanation, but they have concluded these thoughts as a result of the study of the Word of God.

In this context, it is interesting to pass on the short comment J.N. Darby gives on this chapter in his commentary (Synopsis, written around 1850!):

‘Israel shall be restored by means of some powerful nation, outside the limits (the rivers of Cush, Nile and Euphrates) of their then national relationships; but Jehovah stands apart from His own relationship with them, though ordering all things. Then, when Israel shall begin to bud as a vine

in the land, they shall be given up as a prey to the nations. Nevertheless in that time they shall be brought as an offering to Jehovah, and shall themselves bring an offering too.'

## Isaiah 19

### Introduction

After the destruction of Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Ephraim and Judah has been recounted in the previous chapters, the king of the North goes on to the south, to Egypt. The burden of Egypt is particularly interesting because of its amazing climax. At first we find that Egypt, or the king of the South, is going to attack Israel, but without success (Dan 11:40a). But then Assyria or the king of the North comes to attack Israel and he is successful (Dan 11:40b). After the destruction of Israel (Isa 28:22) Assyria will continue and also attack Egypt (Dan 11:42). Egypt is humiliated.

Here, however, we see that God's judgment on the Egyptians is followed by their repentance and conversion. We also see manifestations of God's grace for them and their introduction into the people of God, along with their bitter enemy Assyria, at a time when Israel, God's chosen people, has suffered so painfully from both of these enemies.

### Isa 19:1-10 | Judgment on Egypt

1 *The oracle concerning Egypt.*

*Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt;  
The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence,  
And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.*

2 *"So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians;  
And they will each fight against his brother and each against his neighbor,  
City against city [and] kingdom against kingdom.*

3 *"Then the spirit of the Egyptians will be demoralized within them;  
And I will confound their strategy,  
So that they will resort to idols and ghosts of the dead  
And to mediums and spiritists.*

4 *"Moreover, I will deliver the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel master,  
And a mighty king will rule over them," declares the Lord GOD of hosts.*

5 *The waters from the sea will dry up,*

*And the river will be parched and dry.  
 6 The canals will emit a stench,  
 The streams of Egypt will thin out and dry up;  
 The reeds and rushes will rot away.  
 7 The bulrushes by the Nile, by the edge of the Nile  
 And all the sown fields by the Nile  
 Will become dry, be driven away, and be no more.  
 8 And the fishermen will lament,  
 And all those who cast a line into the Nile will mourn,  
 And those who spread nets on the waters will pine away.  
 9 Moreover, the manufacturers of linen made from combed flax  
 And the weavers of white cloth will be utterly dejected.  
 10 And the pillars [of Egypt] will be crushed;  
 All the hired laborers will be grieved in soul.*

“The burden of Egypt” begins with the LORD coming “on a swift cloud” to Egypt (verse 1; Psa 104:3). This indicates that He will perform His actions through Assyria briefly and powerfully. Both the Egyptians themselves and the idols on which they rely – the sun, the Nile – become null and void at the appearance of His majesty. The idols, the demons behind them, tremble and the heart of the Egyptians melts within them. All fame disappears like snow in the sun.

After Christ has judged Egypt, we also read that He will then appear on earth in Megiddo (Rev 16:15-16) and then go to Edom (Isa 63:1) and to the Mount of Olives (Zec 14:4). These are events that will take place shortly after each other. His coming to these various places indicates that He is about to perform judgmental acts where He comes. These judgments, which are exercised after the end of the great tribulation, will endure for several more days (cf. Dan 12:11).

By His doing the Egyptians will fight each other in a civil war (verse 2). In that situation they will consult their idols. They will ask necromancers to let death depart from them and, by consulting the ghosts of the dead, they will want to know what they can do to escape death (verse 3). They will also resort to fortune-telling. But what will those demons who tremble before the majesty of the LORD be able to tell them? It will only lead to the proof of the complete futility of such consultations.

Out of this chaos a ruler, a cruel master, emerges who makes life even more difficult for them (verse 4). By this cruel master is meant the future king of the North. He is the instrument of “the Lord GOD of hosts”, Who does this, for only He is so great that He can deliver one powerful nation into the hand of the other powerful nation.

Disasters and plagues will succeed each other during this future war (verses 5-10; Isa 11:15). Because of the disasters there will be a shortage of all necessities of life. The entire economy of Egypt depends on the Nile, which is described here in detail with the Nile Delta and canals derived from it for the irrigation of the land. When the Nile dries up, there is no more fertile land (verses 5-6). It will no longer be possible to bake bread (verse 7). Egypt’s fear of the current (we write 2014) construction of a gigantic dam in Ethiopia gives an indication of how dependent Egypt is on the Nile.

A parched Nile also makes the fishermen unemployed (verse 8). There will also be no more fish available. The clothing industry also collapses (verse 9). For flax and linen, of which the raw materials are also supplied by the Nile, there are no more raw materials. All those who earn a living in them will be fired and will be without income (verse 10). In short, the three pillars of the Egyptian economy, agriculture (verses 6-7), fishery (verse 8) and textile industry (verse 9), are severely affected.

### **Isa 19:11-15 | Judgment on the Wisdom of Egypt**

*11 The princes of Zoan are mere fools;  
The advice of Pharaoh’s wisest advisers has become stupid.  
How can you [men] say to Pharaoh,  
“I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings”?  
12 Well then, where are your wise men?  
Please let them tell you,  
And let them understand what the LORD of hosts  
Has purposed against Egypt.  
13 The princes of Zoan have acted foolishly,  
The princes of Memphis are deluded;  
[Those who are] the cornerstone of her tribes  
Have led Egypt astray.  
14 The LORD has mixed within her a spirit of distortion;*

*They have led Egypt astray in all that it does,*

*As a drunken man staggers in his vomit.*

*15 There will be no work for Egypt*

*Which [its] head or tail, [its] palm branch or bulrush, may do.*

The proverbial wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22a; 1Kgs 4:30) fails (verse 11). Zoan and Memphis (verse 13) are the most important places in Lower Egypt. Memphis has been the capital of Egypt for a long time; later Zoan (Tanis) also became particularly important. The monarchs of these two cities seem to have no solutions for this malaise. The policy makers, the council of wise men, are in the dark about the cause of the misery. The LORD challenges the Egyptians to let their wise men come up and tell in the light of their wisdom what He has decided about Egypt (verse 12). They cannot do that because they keep Him out of their wisdom.

Paul takes this word and says that it is in accordance with God's wisdom that the world with its supposed wisdom has not come to the knowledge of God (1Cor 1:20-21). He then draws the conclusion that it has rather pleased God to save people through what the world sees as foolishness: the preaching of the cross (1Cor 1:23). This should be all the more reason for a Christian to consider the world and its so-called wisdom as crucified.

If the Egyptians are truly wise, they will recognize and announce that these disasters come from the LORD of hosts. They will realize that their wise men, who are the cornerstone of their society, upon whom everything rests, have led them astray. This is what the LORD has done, for He has poured a spirit of intoxication within their proud leaders as a judgment (verses 13-14).

As a result, they stagger in their vomit like drunks. This means that they themselves have caused the misery in which they ended up. Foolish confidence in their own wisdom leads not only to a failure to give suitable advice, but also to a walk that causes others to follow the path that leads to destruction.

They are in a state from which no one can redeem them (verse 15). The confusion and hopelessness are so great that neither the leaders, "head" and "palm branch", nor anyone of the common people, "tail" and "bulrush", can find a solution to start working on.

## **Isa 19:16-17 | The Dread of Egypt**

*16 In that day the Egyptians will become like women, and they will tremble and be in dread because of the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He is going to wave over them. 17 The land of Judah will become a terror to Egypt; everyone to whom it is mentioned will be in dread of it, because of the purpose of the LORD of hosts which He is purposing against them.*

In the remainder of this chapter six paragraphs follow all beginning with “in that day” (verses 16,18,19,21,23,24), the typical expression – Hebrew *be’jom* – indicating the end time. Here the direct consequences of the judgments described above are seen. As always with prophecy, we also get to see the consequences in the long run, fulfillments which will only take place in the realm of peace.

Verses 16-17 form a transition from the first part of the burden containing the judgment to the second part of the burden in which grace and salvation are central. The first effect of God’s judgments on Egypt is that the Egyptians will be in dread because of the threatening hand of the LORD (verse 16). This is the introduction to their conversion, for without a broken heart and a humbled spirit there can be no conversion.

Regarding the future Isaiah points to Judah as the Divine instrument for the exercise of His anger over Egypt (verse 17). This will cause fear of Judah among the Egyptians, as in the past (Exo 1:9). Also in the present time people fear for the military strength of Israel. The king of Egypt used to react to this with oppression. Today people threaten with total annihilation. This has been tried several times, for example in the Six-Day War in 1967 and again later in 1973, but in vain. In the future, after the failed invasion of Israel and the invasion of the king of the North, Egypt’s attitude toward Israel will have changed so much that they will open up to God’s people!

## **Isa 19:18 | The Language of Canaan in Egypt**

*18 In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing [allegiance] to the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.*

Here we read that there will come a time when a certain number of cities in Egypt “will be speaking the language of Canaan”, the language of God’s



people. As a general explanation and pre-fulfillment of this verse, it is said that many Jews went to Egypt when the first temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. It is known from historiography that many Israelites lived in Egyptian cities and built synagogues there, and read and taught the law of Moses. Because Egypt was strongly influenced by Judaism in the early Christian period, the Christian faith quickly spread there.

Then “the language of Canaan” was spoken in Egypt, which means that faith in the God of Israel was also culturally and linguistically present in Egypt. It also means that the speaking of the believing Egyptians indicated that they had changed spiritually.

Ultimately, however, the prophecy does not refer to pre-Christian times, nor to Christian times, but looks forward to the millennial realm of peace when Israelites and Egyptians together will acknowledge the one true God. The city called “City of the Destruction” is a reminder of the worship of the sun as an idol [some ancient mss and versions read “City of the Sun”]. In this former stronghold of idolatry, the LORD is served as the living and true God. The Lord Jesus is “the sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2).

However, an application can be made for us and our time. With ‘the language of Canaan’ is not meant a certain ‘jargon’, the use of language and words that are only understood by professionals. No, ‘the language of Canaan’ is a way of speaking that breathes the purity of heaven. As soon as someone is converted and redeemed from the world, of which Egypt is a picture, he speaks a different language. He has a new ‘native language’ with its own vocabulary, with which he can put into words the holy truths of Scripture.

The believer has been given a new vocabulary. These are words that ‘Egypt’ knows nothing about and has no words for. They are ordinary English words, but with a new meaning. There are also many words he used before his conversion, but which he will not and may not use since his conversion. He is therefore admonished: “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such [a word] as is good for edification according to the need [of the moment], so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Eph 4:29; cf. Eph 5:3-4). His language makes it clear what ‘land’ he belongs to.

**Isa 19:19-22 | Egypt Worships the LORD**

*19 In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border. 20 It will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Champion, and He will deliver them. 21 Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it. 22 The LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them.*

The influence of God's people will increase. There will even be an altar to the LORD "in that day" in the midst of the land of Egypt (verse 19). Because of this they will testify of Him (verse 20). There is also "a pillar" or "a memorial stone" at his border, which speaks of the acknowledgment that their land is the property of the LORD. Then the blessing for Egypt takes a great flight. The LORD stands up for them when enemies come and they pray to Him. He makes Himself known to them as if they are His people and they will know Him (verse 21). They will offer sacrifices to Him and make vows, which they will not fail to perform. Verse 22 is a summary of all previous verses.

**Isa 19:23-25 | Egypt and Assyria Serve the LORD.**

*23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. 24 In that day Israel will be the third [party] with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25 whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."*

And the blessing is becoming greater and greater. The two arch-enemies Egypt and Assyria are reconciled (verse 23). Both nations, who fought with each other for world domination, are now united and will serve the LORD together. A highway will connect them. That highway cannot but pass through Israel, a symbol that all blessing for the entire world comes from Israel. First that highway will be used by the rest of the ten tribes to

return to Israel (Isa 11:16), but later also by the nations to travel to Israel to worship the LORD. Jews and Gentiles together enjoy the blessings of the promised realm of peace.

That Israel is the link between the two countries, we see in verse 24. Instead of being subject now to the one, then to the other, as in the past, God's people will have reached the height of power and glory purposed by the LORD. Israel will be "a blessing in the midst of the earth", the earth represented here by Egypt and Assyria. Egypt and Assyria will be among the three most important countries on earth. This is only because the LORD of hosts has blessed them (verse 25).

Egypt and Assyria, the former enemies of God's people, are each given one of the titles of honor by which God calls His own people. Egypt is called "My people" (Isa 1:3) and Assyria "the work of My hands" (Isa 45:11). This indicates that this new situation is not transient. The special bond of the LORD with Israel, the whole people, is evidenced by the name with which He also calls His people in the realm of peace, namely "My inheritance".

## Isaiah 20

### Introduction

This chapter does not start with a 'burden', because Cush is an ally of Egypt. That is why this chapter and the previous one are closely connected.

The background of the commission the LORD gives to Isaiah in this chapter is that some in Judah expect help from Egypt and Cush. In order to be able to resist the strong Assyria, many countries resort to making an alliance with countries that see the same threat. For Judah, however, this would be disobedience to the LORD and proof of a lack of trust in Him.

### Isa 20:1 | Assyria Captures Ashdod

*1 In the year that the commander came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it,*

It begins with the conquest of Ashdod, a Philistine city, by Assyria. The commander of the king of Assyria captures Ashdod, despite the fact that Philistia is supported by Egypt. Philistia is located near Judah. The conquest of Ashdod must have caused great turmoil in Judah. Judah also has a need for the support of Egypt and Cush, although it has turned out that the support of Egypt for Philistia is of no significance.

Ashdod lies on the road from Assyria to Egypt and can therefore be considered the gate of Egypt. The fall of Ashdod is a warning and a sign for Judah not to put his trust in people, including Egypt and his ally Cush. He who puts his trust in people will be ashamed.

### Isa 20:2 | Isaiah Portrays a Message

*2 at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips and take your shoes off your feet." And he did so, going naked and barefoot.*

In view of the circumstances of the preceding verse Isaiah receives a special commission from the LORD (cf. Eze 4:1-8; Hos 1:2-9). He has to portray

the conquest of Egypt and Cush by Assyria by walking through Judah without a cloak and shoes for no less than three years. “Naked” does not mean without any clothing, but without an outer garment (cf. 2Sam 6:20).

By walking without a cloak and shoes he behaves like a slave or a prisoner of war. All that time he is also exposed to wind and weather, to cold and rain. Prophets are not just a mouthpiece of God, but are involved in their message with their whole person (Isa 8:18). His message also has meaning for the end time, because in the end time Assyria, the king of the North, will also invade and conquer Egypt (Dan 11:42).

### Isa 20:3-6 | Meaning of the Performance

*3 And the LORD said, “Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush, 4 so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. 5 Then they will be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast. 6 So the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, ‘Behold, such is our hope, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and we, how shall we escape?’”*

When the three years are over, the explanation of this commission is given (verses 3-4). With his performance Isaiah has given the message that the people will look just like him, if they keep their alliance, or their desire to have it, with Egypt and Cush. For the LORD will let these two nations, from which Hezekiah and Judah seek their support, to experience what Isaiah portrayed (verse 5).

What Isaiah does is a sign and a token or a wonder for the people. A wonder does not have to be supernatural. In this case, you can also translate: a wonderful sign, that is, a sign that evokes admiration. A sign means that the wonder has a meaning and message.

It is a warning to the people of God, and in fact to every people and every human being, not to seek support from people when threatened by an enemy (verse 6), but to resort to God in need. Egypt cannot help. An appeal to this is in vain. Human help will always prove to be completely inadequate (Psa 60:11; Jer 17:5-8).

## Isaiah 21

### Introduction

*Destruction:* So far, Isaiah 14-20, we have seen the indirect judgments of the LORD through His instrument the Assyrians. These judgments are called a “destruction” that is “determined” (Isa 10:22). The Assyrians, or king of the North, attack Israel and then go on to the south, to Egypt.

*Harvest:* In the chapters that follow now, Isaiah 21-24, we will read about the direct judgments of Christ after His appearance. We then get judgments that distinguish between believers who are spared and the wicked who are not spared, but taken away by judgment. This is the opposite of what happens when the believers are raptured, because then the believers are taken away and the unbelievers are left behind.

It is as it were the bringing in of the harvest (Mt 13:36-43; Rev 14:14-16). Then the chaff is separated from the wheat. By the way, even with the ten plagues of Egypt, we first find the judgments where Israel also suffers from, and later the judgments where Israel is spared. The harvest begins with judgment, through Christ, on Babylon, the army of the beast (Rev 19:11-21), and ends with the judgment on the living (Mt 25:31-46), whereby also as it were the chaff is separated from the wheat.

There are three burdens in this chapter. They concern Babylon (verses 1-10), Edom (verses 11-12) and Arabia (verses 13-17). We will see that in the future, Babylon will be equal to the restored Roman Empire or the united states of Europe, perhaps with other Western allies. Babylon (Rome, Europe) will make an alliance with the antichrist, the coming false king of Israel. Babylon, Europe, will come to the aid of the then defeated land of Israel and will come to Israel with his army. The king of the North will then return to Israel. The battle can begin. But then the Lord Jesus appears!

### Isa 21:1-2 | Burden of the Wilderness of the Sea (Babylon)

1 The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea.  
As windstorms in the Negev sweep on,

*It comes from the wilderness, from a terrifying land.  
 2 A harsh vision has been shown to me;  
 The treacherous one [still] deals treacherously,  
 and the destroyer [still] destroys.  
 Go up, Elam, lay siege, Media;  
 I have made an end of all the groaning she has caused.*

“The wilderness of the sea” (verse 1) we must locate in the south of Iraq. It is Babylon that lies in the Gulf area (cf. Jer 51:13a,42). We read that John stands on the sand of the sea (Rev 12:17). Here we can see that Babylon is connected with Revelation 13 and especially the beast of the sea, which is the restored Roman Empire in the future. Babylon lies by the sea, but it will soon be conquered and destroyed by the Medes and become a wilderness. Also spiritually, the beautiful, rich Babylon is a barren wilderness (Rev 17:3) and the nations are depicted as the great waters, the restless sea (Rev 17:1,15).

It is clearly a prophecy, because at that moment Assyria is still the mighty world empire. There is not much of Babylon to be seen yet. It is precisely the essence of the prophecy that God describes future events in it, none of which can yet be discovered in the present.

The same goes for the conquest of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. Elam, that is the southwest of Persia, together with Media (verse 2), marches violently and quickly against Babylon (Dan 5:28-30). Thus the LORD will give His people relief from the yoke of Babylon and make “an end of all the groaning”.

It also has a meaning for the end time. While the king of the North is engaged in battle in Egypt (Dan 11:40-44), finally the mighty army of the restored Roman Empire comes to the north of Israel. The army of the king of the North then returns to Israel. Then the time has come for Christ to appear and personally judge this empire, which is typologically portrayed by Babylon (Dan 11:45). What King Cyrus, the king of the Medo-Persian empire, – called “His anointed” by the LORD (Isa 45:1) – has done with Babylon in the past, will happen through Christ (= Anointed) in the future. In Isaiah 40-45, Cyrus is a type of Christ.

### Isa 21:3-4 | The Pains of Isaiah

*3 For this reason my loins are full of anguish;  
Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor.  
I am so bewildered I cannot hear, so terrified I cannot see.  
4 My mind reels, horror overwhelms me;  
The twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.*

In history, these verses are fulfilled as a pre-fulfillment when an ally of King Cyrus the Persian, King Darius the Mede, and his army capture the city of Babylon by surprise. They describe the feelings of the people of the city during the sudden invasion of the Medes and the Persians. However, they also describe the feelings of Isaiah who sees this as a seer. They also describe the expression of the feelings of the army of Europe in the future when the Lord judges them by His appearance.

The terrible violence Isaiah sees in the vision does not leave him unmoved. When he sees all the suffering and misery that come over Babylon, even though they have deserved it, it seizes him again (verse 3). The pains he experiences are great. Pain shoots go through his body and robs him of the strength to walk. It is an unavoidable pain, just as there is no escape for a woman in labor. He cannot get rid of it. It robs him of the pleasures of the rest of the night (verse 4).

What impression does it make on us when we hear of disasters about peoples and countries that persecute Christians? Or what are our feelings when we think of the suffering Israel and the world will be plunged into just before the return of the Lord Jesus, which means soon (Mt 24:33)?

### Isa 21:5-9 | Carelessness and Fall of Babylon

*5 They set the table, they spread out the cloth, they eat, they drink;  
"Rise up, captains, oil the shields,"  
6 For thus the Lord says to me,  
"Go, station the lookout, let him report what he sees.  
7 "When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs,  
A train of donkeys, a train of camels,  
Let him pay close attention, very close attention."  
8 Then the lookout called,*



*"O Lord, I stand continually by day on the watchtower,  
 And I am stationed every night at my guard post.  
 9 "Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs."  
 And one said, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon;  
 And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground."*

What is described in these verses was fulfilled at the fall of Babylon on October 12, 539 BC and has been described in detail by historians. The Babylonians don't think at all of the impending doom. They live a carefree life, feasting on an abundance of food on tables at which they recline on comfortable rugs (verse 5). While they are feasting, the enemy is attacking them unexpectedly. He has changed the course of a canal that flows through the city of Babylon and has crept into Babylon through the drained riverbed.

This scene of carelessness and the invasion of the enemy is described in Daniel 5. See also Isaiah 13-14. Isaiah describes it as if he is present, while it will take another hundred and seventy-five years before it happens. He calls them to leave their laziness and to get ready for battle. Oil the shield is smearing it with oil to let the enemy's blows slip away.

Isaiah must station the lookout (verse 6). It seems that he himself is that lookout, as further on, in verse 11, he himself is a watchman (cf. Hab 2:1-2). A lookout is someone who is in the counsel of God, who knows what is going to happen and who looks forward to that event.

It is the same for us. Whoever has learned from Scripture what God has foretold by comparing Scripture with Scripture, who knows His purpose and accepts what has become clear to him, is able to warn others. A lookout looks out and is in fellowship with God.

God says what to look out for (verse 7). He has to "pay close attention, very close attention". He confirms that he will do so on the watchtower at night (verse 8). He is very watchful. Sleeping is not for those who take God's warnings and directions seriously. Then he sees how exactly that happens what God has foretold (verse 9). God's instruments do their work and bring down Babylon.

Verse 8 can also be translated as follows: "And he cried: A lion!" With his exclamation "a lion!" Isaiah refers to the army of the Medes and the Persians. That army is dangerous as a lion. The Dead Sea Scrolls mention

‘seer’ instead of ‘lion’ (these words are almost the same in Hebrew). The text should therefore be rendered as “the seer exclaims: ...”.

Babylon will fall through “a troop of riders” and “horsemen” of the Medes and Persians (verse 9). The fact that the horsemen come “in pairs” may indicate the dual nationality, that of the Medes and Persians. The fall of Babylon is shown in the book of Revelation with the same words (Rev 14:8; 18:2). This shows the close connection between the prophecy of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament. Only in the end time, at the appearance of Christ – the Lion from the tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5) – will this prophecy about the fall of Babylon be fully fulfilled.

The sequence of events described by Isaiah makes it clear that the judgment on Babylon (Isaiah 21) will only take place after the destruction of Israel by the king of the North (Isaiah 17-18) and after this king has been advanced to also destroy Egypt, the king of the South, and his allies (Isaiah 19-20).

### **Isa 21:10 | The Comfort for God’s people**

*10 O my threshed [people], and my afflicted of the threshing floor!  
What I have heard from the LORD of hosts,  
The God of Israel, I make known to you.*

Here the threshing by God becomes clear. Threshing is God’s means of discipling His people. He uses the nations as an instrument to thresh and strike His people (cf. Isa 10:5). That is to get rid of the chaff and keep the wheat.

With this message Isaiah wants to encourage and warn his people. He does not bring the people a message invented by himself, as modern theologians would have us believe, but passes on what he has heard from the LORD, the God of His people. From the Lord Jesus we read that He speaks what He saw with His father (Jn 8:38). We too may pass on what we have learned from the Lord and not our own ideas and interpretations.

### **Isa 21:11-12 | Burden of Edom**

*11 The oracle concerning Edom.  
One keeps calling to me from Seir,*

*"Watchman, how far gone is the night?  
 Watchman, how far gone is the night?"  
 12 The watchman says,  
 "Morning comes but also night.  
 If you would inquire, inquire;  
 Come back again."*

In the first line of verse 11 it says in Hebrew Dumah instead of Edom. Dumah descends from Ishmael (Gen 25:12-14). That this prophecy is about Edom and by Dumah Edom is meant can be seen from the second line, where "Seir" is mentioned. Seir lies in Edom (Gen 36:8). Dumah means "silence", that is, the silence of death. It speaks of the agony that comes over Edom. They have heard what the great prophet Isaiah has said. They have heard his warnings or heard others talk about it. They have also heard about his announcements of judgment and of salvation and redemption.

Here Isaiah is a type of the faithful remnant of Israel who will then proclaim the gospel of the kingdom (Mt 24:14), in this case to the Edomites. This gospel should be clearly distinguished from the gospel preached in this time of grace, the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

Now they have become curious if he has something to tell them. That is why they ask Isaiah, the watchman, a question from Seir, the area where the Edomites live (Jos 24:4a). The repetition gives the question extra emphasis. The meaning of the question is symbolic: How far has the night already passed? Enclosed in it is the question of how long it is before day-break, which is the period of Israel's glory spoken of by the prophets.

How the question is asked to Isaiah is not told. Possibly Isaiah saw someone in a vision asking him that question. Something similar we also see when Paul sees in a vision a Macedonian man calling him (Acts 16:9).

The Edomites also suffer from the Assyrians. Could the prophet from Judah also say how long that will take for them? They ask that question twice. Do they really want to know when the morning comes, i.e. the time of peace, the time of Israel's glory, or are they mockingly assuming that Isaiah just calls out anything (cf. 2Pet 3:3-4)?

Isaiah gives them the assurance that morning will surely come. The kingdom of peace is coming, for the "sun of righteousness will rise" (Mal 4:2).

But also night will come. The night here is God's judgment on Edom. The day of Israel's glory will be the night of judgment on Edom.

Isaiah knows the answer because he is in God's counsel (verse 12). He also gives the answer. He points to the dawn of a coming day and sees it as already having come. That is said by the believer who trusts God on His Word and believes that He will introduce Israel once into the full blessing. But Isaiah also says that a night will come.

Then the Edomite is called to come back again. This is another call to repent, also for the mockers. Even in a message of judgment, God in His indulgence continues to call man to repent. Even on the last page of the Bible, it still sounds: "Let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Rev 22:17).

The watchman's answer has meaning for every 'Edomite'. For the sincerely inquiring 'Edomite' who accepts the watchman's message as spoken in the Name of God, the day will come after the night (Rom 13:12a). But for a mocking 'Edomite' it is night and remains night. Those who really want to know what the future looks like, what is going to happen, are invited to inquire. The sincerity of the question will also be evident in responding to the call to return to God and His invitation to come to Him (Mt 11:28).

We may ask each time how long it will take before it becomes day. This is proof that we do not live for here and now, but in the light of the future. It is an encouragement for the believer. Each time we may question the prophetic word and be encouraged by it that God is not out of control and that He will finally fulfill all His promises. It is also implied that, in order to see it become day, it is necessary for the questioner to come back again, that is to turn to God.

For Israel and the world, "a morning without clouds" (2Sam 23:4) will come when the Lord Jesus establishes His realm of peace. This must first be preceded by His coming to judge. Israel and the world must first pass through the night of the great tribulation. That night will pass into the everlasting night for all who do not repent. For all who repent, who come back again, it will be everlasting light.

In this section about Dumah we find a prophetic warning to Edom. If Edom does not listen to this warning, the anger of God will come on him through

the Assyrians, the king of the North (Isa 10:5). Isaiah does not mention this explicitly, but we do find it in Obadiah (Oba 1:1-9).

After the appearance of the LORD and the restoration of Israel, including the returned ten tribes, He will roar from Zion (Joel 3:16) and tread His wine press in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:12-13). Then the nations in the land of Edom will be judged (Isa 34:1-15; 63:1-6). Edom then also will be destroyed again.

Finally, the faithful remnant of Israel will take possession of their inheritance by completely exterminating the remaining Edomites (Isa 11:14; 34:6-17; Eze 25:14). That is why Edom is called Dumah here, which means 'the silence of death'.

### Isa 21:13-17 | Burden of Arabia

*13 The oracle about Arabia.*

*In the thickets of Arabia you must spend the night,  
O caravans of Dedanites.*

*14 Bring water for the thirsty,  
O inhabitants of the land of Tema,  
Meet the fugitive with bread.*

*15 For they have fled from the swords,  
From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow  
And from the press of battle.*

*16 For thus the Lord said to me, "In a year, as a hired man would count it, all the splendor of Kedar will terminate; 17 and the remainder of the number of bowmen, the mighty men of the sons of Kedar, will be few; for the LORD God of Israel has spoken."*

The word "Arabia" (verse 13) is related to the word "night". The words "spend the night" refer to the fact that the Arabs will flee from the enemy. That they must not spend the night on the normal caravan routes, but in the thickets, the (wild) forest, where there are no oases, underlines this thought.

The Dedanites are a trading Arab tribe from southern Arabia. Trading means that they are travelers with caravans who transport their merchandise to distant places. They are descendants of Abraham and Keturah

(Gen 25:1-3). Tema is located in northwestern Arabia. Isaiah calls on the Temanites to help the fugitive with water and bread (verse 14). The Dedanites are fleeing from the sword of the king of Assyria (verse 15). Now they must spend the night with the Temanites, an Ishmaelite tribe, descendants of Abraham and Hagar (Gen 25:12,15).

The Arabs may have escaped an immediate danger by fleeing, but soon after they will be hit by a major disaster. The time is again precisely determined (verse 16; cf. Isa 16:14). Kedar is located in northern Arabia. It is known for its beautiful black tents (Song 1:5; cf. Jer 49:28-29). Of that beauty, just like of these Arab tribes, not much will remain (verse 17).

## Isaiah 22

### Introduction

Isaiah 21 speaks about the appearance of Christ. Both Babylon (Europe) and Assyria (the king of the North) are destroyed in a supernatural way in the north of Israel, near Megiddo or Har-Magedon. Then Isaiah 22 takes us to the establishment of the throne of David in Jerusalem by Christ. But first we see how the antichrist, who is the king of Israel during the great tribulation, is dethroned (verse 19; cf. Zec 11:17) during the destruction of Israel by the king of the North.

These end-time prophecies are illustrated by their pre-fulfillment when Jerusalem is destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar at the time of King Zedekiah. We also see this pre-fulfillment in this chapter in the deposition of Shebna, prophetically a type of the antichrist, in whose place then comes Eliakim, prophetically a type of Christ, Who then starts to reign in Jerusalem.

### Isa 22:1-7 | Ignoring the Coming Judgment

*1 The oracle concerning the valley of vision.*

*What is the matter with you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops?*

*2 You who were full of noise,*

*You boisterous town, you exultant city;*

*Your slain were not slain with the sword,*

*Nor did they die in battle.*

*3 All your rulers have fled together,*

*[And] have been captured without the bow;*

*All of you who were found were taken captive together,*

*Though they had fled far away.*

*4 Therefore I say, "Turn your eyes away from me,*

*Let me weep bitterly,*

*Do not try to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people."*

*5 For the Lord GOD of hosts has a day of panic, subjugation and confusion  
In the valley of vision,  
A breaking down of walls  
And a crying to the mountain.*

*6 Elam took up the quiver  
With the chariots, infantry [and] horsemen;  
And Kir uncovered the shield.*

*7 Then your choicest valleys were full of chariots,  
And the horsemen took up fixed positions at the gate.*

We can only understand the burden of Jerusalem, here called “the valley of vision” (verse 1; cf. Jer 21:13), in this chapter if we see its prophetic fulfillment. Otherwise, this prophecy of Jerusalem, after Isaiah 7-12, seems superfluous and inappropriate in the midst of the judgments on the nations. Although the city is not literally in a valley, it is surrounded by mountains (Psa 125:2a). The name is connected with the Kidron valley near Jerusalem.

A spectacle makes the inhabitants climb on the rooftops, so as not to miss anything of the spectacle. Baffled, Isaiah wonders what’s the matter with them, of which they are inspired. Can’t they see that judgment is coming? However, they do not want to know about an impending judgment. The danger is ignored and washed away by amusement and that while, Isaiah assures the inhabitants of Jerusalem, judgments will come upon the city (verse 2).

As is so often the case, these are both judgments that are soon coming and judgments that will take place in the end time. In the short term the king of Assyria will enter Judah, but without conquering Jerusalem (2Kgs 18:13). Later on Babylon will destroy Jerusalem as a pre-fulfillment of this prophecy. The full fulfillment will take place when the prophetic Assyrians, the king of the North, come to destroy Jerusalem. The humiliation will be great. Rulers will flee so that the army is adrift (verse 3). No one will escape, no matter how far they have fled.

Isaiah is baffled when he sees the destruction of the city before his mind (verse 4). Jerusalem was not taken by Assyria in his days, the days of Hezekiah. By a wonder of God’s merciful intervention the city was spared. However, it did not bring the inhabitants of the city to repent and return



to God. Therefore, the city will be destroyed, which will be done by Nebuchadnezzar. Isaiah is so deeply impressed by this that he does not want to be comforted. His sorrow is so great that he cannot let anyone share in it. He knows that this destruction comes from the LORD (verse 5) and is therefore righteous, but also so fierce.

We see here that God has no joy in the judgment He has to bring on anyone of His creatures. He must certainly judge, but at the same time it is His strange work (Isa 28:21). The same Spirit through Whom the prophet sees the suffering to come leads him to weep over it.

We also see this in Him, Who is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature (Heb 1:2-3a). He sheds tears when He sees the suffering that will come over Jerusalem and is saddened by the hardness of heart that makes the city refuse to hide under His wings (Lk 19:41-42; Mt 23:37). And we too must never speak with a cold heart, without sympathy, about the terrible eternal punishment that will be inflicted on anyone who refuses to repent.

Isaiah sees the enemy preparing to invade the land (verse 6). The weapons are taken up and the fighting force is assembled. From strategically located areas such as Elam, in southwest of Persia, and Kir, in north of Persia, the Medes, the armies of Assyria will enter Judah. There they will fill the most beautiful valleys of Judah with their armies (verse 7). The beautiful sight will turn into a scene full of menace. They will array themselves opposite the gate of Jerusalem.

As with the king of the North in the future, the army of Assyria that attacks Jerusalem consists of an alliance of many peoples. Elam and Kir are also part of this alliance (verses 6-7). Elam (Persia) is known for his archers, while Kir (Medes) with uncovered shields is ready for battle.

### **Isa 22:8-11 | The LORD Ignored**

*8 And He removed the defense of Judah.*

*In that day you depended on the weapons of the house of the forest,*

*9 And you saw that the breaches*

*In the [wall] of the city of David were many;*

*And you collected the waters of the lower pool.*

*10 Then you counted the houses of Jerusalem*

*And tore down houses to fortify the wall.*

*11 And you made a reservoir between the two walls*

*For the waters of the old pool.*

*But you did not depend on Him who made it,*

*Nor did you take into consideration Him who planned it long ago.*

What is described in this section took place in the time of Hezekiah (2Kgs 20:12-21; 2Chr 32:2-7,30). This section describes how all kinds of precautions are taken to defend themselves against a possible attack from Assyria. A city that foresees a long siege has much to arrange. They have to provide weapon supplies (verse 8), water supplies (verse 9) and reinforcement of the walls (verse 10).

Their precautions are good and appropriate. The wrong thing is that they only “depend” on that, only look out for that (verse 8), instead of trusting in God. With the people there is no faith, they do “not depend on Him who made it” (verse 11). They do not think that all this comes over them from His hand, to bring them to repentance. They look to human certainties and not to the LORD. They simply do not see Him.

This last section applies especially to the antichrist, the coming leader of Israel, who has to defend his land against the Assyrians, the coming king of the North. This antichrist will put his trust in an alliance with the beast, the powerful leader of the united Europe. But it is in vain. What protects Jerusalem will be removed (verse 8), but they do not depend on Him Who did this (verse 11). The people do not listen to the rod and to Him Who has destined it for them. Ultimately, the LORD will use the king of the North as an instrument to remove the antichrist, the false king of Israel (verses 15-19).

The lesson of these verses is important. What we want to do in our own strength is useless and devastating. Only what we do in God’s power and guided by Him has a favorable effect. Evil can never be countered with means we have acquired through human wisdom. Forgetting God leads to a reliance on human resources and means, which will inevitably end in disappointment and misery.

**Isa 22:12-13 | The Call to Repentance Ignored**

*12 Therefore in that day the Lord GOD of hosts  
called [you] to weeping, to wailing,  
To shaving the head and to wearing sackcloth.  
13 Instead, there is gaiety and gladness,  
Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep,  
Eating of meat and drinking of wine:  
“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.”*

When they are thus besieged, the LORD calls for humility, repentance and conversion (verse 12). But what do they do? They surrender themselves to feasting, eating and drinking (verse 13). They are utterly carefree in the face of imminent danger. In this they resemble Babylon who also feasts frivolous, while the enemy stands at the gate (Isa 21:5; cf. Lk 17:26-27). They even face death.

Instead of being driven out to the LORD because of this, their defiant reaction is: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.” It is a description of today’s society where people also live like this. It is also the spiritual state of the people of Israel under the reign of the antichrist at the time of the invasion of the king of the North.

A person can only speak in this way if he does not believe in a resurrection, in an afterlife. Paul quotes these words to demonstrate the folly of people who say they are believers but deny the resurrection of Christ (1Cor 15:32b). If Christ would not have risen, then do what you like, because then everything is over and out with death. It is the pinnacle of foolishness for any thinking person to believe that, for “now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep” (1Cor 15:20). This means that a person once will have to account to Him. It also means that all the suffering and defamation that believers now endure for the sake of their connection to Him one day will be rewarded by Him.

**Isa 22:14 | Not Forgiven**

*14 But the LORD of hosts revealed Himself to me,  
“Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you  
Until you die,” says the Lord GOD of hosts.*

Even if people cannot get rid of the thought of an impending judgment, they will experience the thought of it as an incentive to still enjoy what there is to enjoy. There is no turning to God with repentance for their sins.

Then comes the moment when it is forever too late. That is also the case with the people. The people are in such a state of apostasy, that the LORD cannot forgive their iniquity (verse 14). They will then die in their sins (cf. Jn 8:24).

This is one of the most terrible judgments in the Old Testament. It corresponds to sinning willfully, sinning defiantly, with a clenched fist to heaven (Heb 10:26; Num 15:30-31). There is no sin offering for this. This is how seriously the LORD takes the indifferent attitude of the people.

### **Isa 22:15-19 | Prophecy About Shebna**

*15 Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts,  
"Come, go to this steward,  
To Shebna, who is in charge of the [royal] household,  
16 'What right do you have here,  
And whom do you have here,  
That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here,  
You who hew a tomb on the height,  
You who carve a resting place for yourself in the rock?  
17 'Behold, the LORD is about to hurl you headlong, O man.  
And He is about to grasp you firmly  
18 [And] roll you tightly like a ball,  
[To be cast] into a vast country;  
There you will die  
And there your splendid chariots will be,  
You shame of your master's house.'  
19 "I will depose you from your office,  
And I will pull you down from your station.*

Amidst the many prophecies about peoples and cities, Isaiah, in this and the next section, prophesies exceptionally about some persons. Why is that? One of the main reasons why God uses the king of the North to discipline Israel is to remove the antichrist, the false king of Israel, from the

throne. That's why the prophecies about Shebna and Eliakim belong to the burden of the valley of the vision, which is about... Jerusalem!

First Isaiah writes about Shebna (verses 15-19). The frivolity of Jerusalem, described in the previous verses, includes a figure like Shebna (verse 15). With an undertone of contempt the LORD speaks of him as "this steward". He is in charge of the royal household. That is an important job, to which a lot of power is attached. But Isaiah is not impressed by it and goes to him at the command of the LORD. Although only the command is mentioned and not its execution, it is clear that the prophet also fulfills the command in obedience (cf. Isa 7:3; 8:1).

Shebna lives according to his standards. He lives for "here", a word that appears three times in verse 16. By using it three times and in an interrogative sense, the LORD emphasizes the folly of Shebna to connect everything only with the earth and the here and now. In his pride he even took care of a rock tomb. It is a mausoleum, carved between the graves of the kings (cf. 2Chr 32:33). Also at his death he wants to be treated with honor.

However, nothing of his plans will come to pass (cf. Lk 12:20-21) because the LORD will throw him away like a ball of rope (verses 17-18; cf. 2Sam 18:17-18). He will not be placed in the tomb he carved out. He will come to his end in a foreign country. In that country nothing of his arrogance will remain. His splendid chariots will be a disgrace to the house of his master, that is Hezekiah.

In verse 19 the LORD says that He will forcibly remove Shebna – who, like Ahaz in Isaiah 7, is a foreshadow of the antichrist – from his function. Shebna will be deposed from his high post. In the same way the LORD will make short work of the antichrist by the king of the North and expel him from his high post as king of Israel.

Shebna will leave life the way he lived it: without God and without hope. Thus it will happen to anyone who has had a high place in the world, but did not take God into account and died without faith in Christ. He will be cast like a ball into a vast country. The same will be done with the antichrist.

## Isa 22:20-22 | Prophecy About Eliakim

*20 "Then it will come about in that day,  
That I will summon My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah,  
21 And I will clothe him with your tunic  
And tie your sash securely about him.  
I will entrust him with your authority,  
And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Je-  
rusalem and to the house of Judah.  
22 "Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder,  
When he opens no one will shut,  
When he shuts no one will open.*

When the false king of Israel, the antichrist, is dethroned, the rightful King comes to His throne. That is why Isaiah has not yet finished his message for Shebna. The second person he writes about is Eliakim. The LORD says to Shebna that Eliakim will take his place (verse 20). He calls Eliakim "My servant". We come across the title "My servant" several times in the second part of Isaiah as a title of the Messiah (Isa 42:1; 49:3; 52:13; 53:11). Therefore, Eliakim is a clear type of Christ, the Messiah. Eliakim, the servant of the LORD, shall receive all the clothing of Shebna, which means that he takes over all his dignity and dominion (verse 21).

The mention of these two persons is done here because Shebna is a type of the antichrist and Eliakim of Christ. The destruction of Jerusalem by the king of the North was allowed by the LORD to remove the antichrist from Jerusalem to make way for Christ. That is the first phase of the judgment on the antichrist. The second phase starts at the appearance of Christ. Then the Lord Jesus will throw the antichrist (just like Shebna), together with the beast, like a ball to a vast place, namely the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).

Eliakim "will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah". This is a wonderful description for this servant of the LORD. Everything that Shebna should have been, but was not, Eliakim will be. What Eliakim takes over from Shebna shows the great power of this position. Just as Eliakim replaces Shebna, so Christ will replace the antichrist.

The key power lies with Eliakim (verse 22). Whoever has the key is in possession of everything behind the door that can be opened with this key. It is a large key, which he carries on his shoulder. The key gives him access to all the rooms and treasure chambers of the king. The supreme authorities are in the hand of Eliakim.

That Eliakim is a clear type of Christ can be seen in the way Christ presents Himself to the church in Philadelphia (Rev 3:7; cf. Rev 1:18). The key is the key of the house of David. In the hands of Christ is the power to fulfill all the promises made to the house of David. In the end, only Christ will fully fulfill what is entrusted to Eliakim and said of him.

The key gives access to the treasure house of God's truth. Christ is the key to all the precious things God has stored in His Word. All who look to Christ as the God-given Leader and Protector will have access to that treasure house. For this purpose, He uses "heads of a household" who brings out of his treasure things new and old (Mt 13:52). The condition is that the mind of the church in Philadelphia is there, the mind of brotherly love – Philadelphia means 'brotherly love'.

### Isa 22:23-24 | A Peg in a Firm Place

23 *"I will drive him [like] a peg in a firm place,  
And he will become a throne of glory to his father's house.*

24 *So they will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, offspring and  
issue, all the least of vessels, from bowls to all the jars.*

Christ is the "peg" that is driven "in a firm place" (verse 23). He takes the place of honor in the midst of His "father's house", His family, which are all those who are born of God through faith in His Name (Rom 8:29; Jn 1:12). When He appears in glory, His glory will be seen in all who are firmly attached to Him (2Thes 1:10). He who is connected to Him, "offspring and issue", that is what comes out of Him, need not be afraid to ever become detached from Him. He can carry the whole weight (verse 24; Jn 10:28-29). So He will be as King of Israel.

All kinds of objects needed for the lives of those living in tents, for pilgrims, are hung on the peg. This shows that all means of refreshment and comfort that God has for His people are under the sure care of Christ.

### **Isa 22:25 | The Peg Broken off and Fallen**

*25 In that day," declares the LORD of hosts, "the peg driven in a firm place will give way; it will even break off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken."*

This verse is a summary of the prophecy about Shebna which is introduced with the words "in that day". It is again about Shebna as a picture of the antichrist. He is the peg that seemed to be driven in a firm place, but it has been broken off. All those who hung on him, who believed in him and followed him, will perish with him. "The LORD has spoken", therefore it will surely happen. It is again a warning for every Israelite not to bow down before the antichrist.



## Isaiah 23

### Introduction

Now that the Lord Jesus has taken His rightful place as King of Israel in the previous chapter, there is still a power in the world that will also be judged by Him. It is not a nation, nor is it a military power, but an economic power.

Already in our time we see that events in the world are not only determined by military or political power, but also by economic power. The European Union, for example, is primarily an economic power. Christ's government also means the end of the economic power of this world.

### Isa 23:1-5 | The Report of the Destruction of Tyre

*1 The oracle concerning Tyre.*

*Wail, O ships of Tarshish,*

*For [Tyre] is destroyed, without house [or] harbor;*

*It is reported to them from the land of Cyprus.*

*2 Be silent, you inhabitants of the coastland,*

*You merchants of Sidon;*

*Your messengers crossed the sea*

*3 And [were] on many waters.*

*The grain of the Nile, the harvest of the River was her revenue;*

*And she was the market of nations.*

*4 Be ashamed, O Sidon;*

*For the sea speaks, the stronghold of the sea, saying,*

*"I have neither travailed nor given birth,*

*I have neither brought up young men [nor] reared virgins."*

*5 When the report [reaches] Egypt,*

*They will be in anguish at the report of Tyre.*

"The burden of Tyre" is the last of the series of burdens of the nations that started with the burden of Babylon. The 'city-kingdom' of Tyre was located in today's Lebanon. Just as Assyria represents the (military) world

power, so Tyre represents the power of trade. The influence Tyre exerted through trade is greater than that of any other people. Together with Babylon and Egypt Tyre is the representative of what is found in the world. In this way the world at that time is painted: military power, economic power and religious-political power. These factors are also topical today.

*Egypt* represents the world as a system where people live in darkness and slavery of sin. Egypt is ruled by Pharaoh, a picture of satan.

*Babylon* represents the world as a religious system based not on the revelation of God, but on a self-powered religion. This system culminates in "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots" – that is, the roman-catholic church – which as a religious-political system wants to rule the world, but which will be judged by that same world (Rev 17:5,16).

*Tyre* represents the world as an economic system where people strive to enrich themselves to be able to wallow in luxury. A detailed description of the opulence of Tyre can be found in Ezekiel 26-28. It is a prophecy about the wealth of the Roman Empire (Europe) in the end time (Rev 18:11-16). The characteristics of Tyre are applied to Babylon. In the end time, the united states of Europe will show both the characteristics of Babylon and those of Tyre. There is no place for God in all these things. The day will soon come when all the consumerism of man will be put to an end. This is shown in the judgment on Tyre.

Tyre is seen here together with the older city of Sidon, which is spoken here as a mother of Tyre (verses 4,12). The Lord Jesus mentions both cities as examples of wickedness, which however are surpassed in their wickedness by Chorazin and Bethsaida (Mt 11:21-22). The latter cities reject their Messiah and will therefore be punished in the day of judgment more severely than Tyre and Sidon.

The future destruction of Tyre is painted vividly before our very eyes right from the start. The sailors who traded overseas, in Tarshish (probably) in Spain, and sail back with ships full of big profits, will not find a home anymore (verse 1). When they sail home after a stopover in the land of Cyprus, they heard this news about Tyre.

This appalling message has implications for all countries with which Tyre trades (verse 2). Because of the destruction of Tyre, they too have lost their

income. Their trading relationship is more important to them than a relationship with God. That relationship doesn't interest them at all because their god is Mammon, the god of wealth, himself (Mt 6:24). A large source of income comes from the granary of Sichor, the storage place of the grain harvest of the Nile region, the granary of the world (verse 3).

In verse 4 the prophet speaks to the city of Sidon. In a poetic way this city is compared to the sea with which it is most closely connected. The sea is for Tyre what fertile ground is for other cities and countries. After all, the city has obtained its great wealth through trade and shipping. Tyre is the "stronghold of the sea". It is built on a rocky island in the sea.

Through the mouth of the sea, both cities complain that it is as if they have never given birth or raised children, that much they have been depopulated by devastation. Egypt, which is in a close relationship with Tyre because of the trade in grain and earns from it, has now lost its most important customer and will be in anguish at the report of the devastation (verse 5).

### Isa 23:6-9 | The LORD Has Done It

*6 Pass over to Tarshish;  
Wail, O inhabitants of the coastland.  
7 Is this your jubilant [city],  
Whose origin is from antiquity,  
Whose feet used to carry her to colonize distant places?  
8 Who has planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns,  
Whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth?  
9 The LORD of hosts has planned it, to defile the pride of all beauty,  
To despise all the honored of the earth.*

The survivors have no future in Tyre. They get the urgent advice to go back to Tarshish (verse 1), now not to trade there, but to live there as a refugee (verse 6). The farewell of Tyre is final. They will leave wailing at the sight of the ruins of their beloved city. She was once such a bustling city with a rich history and a great urge to expand (verse 7).

To awaken the conscience of the listener / reader the question is asked how the collapse of this trading empire could have happened (verse 8). Tyre is

presented in its magnitude as “the bestower of crowns”, i.e. Tyre makes its relations powerful. Behind this we see satan, who can say to the Lord Jesus that he can give all the power and glory of the world to whom he wants (Lk 4:5-6). The answer to the question is given immediately by Isaiah. The LORD of hosts has done it (verse 9). The reason is given: the pride in one’s own beauty, the boasting of one’s own abilities.

Man has used the results of the well-functioning economy to greater honor and glory of himself and has not given any glory to God, Who has enabled him to do so. That pride is defiled by the LORD. He has despised all those people at the top of the power of commerce. He will also humiliate the power behind Tyre, satan, who also exalted himself on his own beauty (Eze 28:17).

It is a warning for us not to use what we have received from the Lord for our own honor. This applies to our physical as well as our spiritual and intellectual capacities.

### **Isa 23:10-14 | New Residential Area for Tyre**

*10 Overflow your land like the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish,  
There is no more restraint.*

*11 He has stretched His hand out over the sea,  
He has made the kingdoms tremble;  
The LORD has given a command concerning Ca-  
naan to demolish its strongholds.*

*12 He has said, “You shall exult no more, O  
crushed virgin daughter of Sidon.*

*Arise, pass over to Cyprus; even there you will find no rest.”*

*13 Behold, the land of the Chaldeans—this is the people [which] was  
not; Assyria appointed it for desert creatures—they erected their  
siege towers, they stripped its palaces, they made it a ruin.*

*14 Wail, O ships of Tarshish,  
For your stronghold is destroyed.*

In verse 10 the colony of Tyre is called “daughter of Tarshish” (verses 1,6). The rich past is cut off. Return is impossible. Tyre no longer exists. The motherland is gone. There is no more restraint (verse 1), no powers that

hold them captive and rule over them. They can, just like the Nile, do what they want. They will have to work the land as a source of income, just as the Nile floods the land and makes it fertile.

The Septuagint translates the beginning of verse 10 with “work your land”. It means that instead of being a sailor they should now become a farmer. The sea will no longer be able to serve them as a trade route because the LORD has stretched out His hand over it, that is to say, He has carried out the judgment on it (verse 11). His command over Tyre, called “Canaan,” which means “commerce”, is that it will be destroyed.

For Sidon, just as for Tyre, bathing in opulence and living in luxury and entertainment is over (verse 12). The LORD calls her “crushed virgin daughter of Sidon”. The city is dishonored, stripped of its beauty and attractiveness. When the Sidonians, possibly as a result of the fugitives from Tyre, visit Cyprus, they will think they have escaped disaster there. But if they think they will find peace there, they will be deceived. The following verse gives the reason for this. The land of the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, was destroyed by the Assyrians at that time. In the same way, Tyre will be destroyed by the Chaldeans (verse 13), which was destroyed at that time.

After this description of the destructions carried out by order of the LORD, the call of verse 1 is repeated (verse 14).

### **Isa 23:15-18 | God’s People Get the Profit of Tyre**

*15 Now in that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as [in] the song of the harlot:*

*16 Take [your] harp, walk about the city,  
O forgotten harlot;*

*Pluck the strings skillfully, sing many songs,  
That you may be remembered.*

*17 It will come about at the end of seventy years that the LORD will visit Tyre. Then she will go back to her harlot’s wages and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. 18 Her gain and her harlot’s wages will be set apart to the LORD; it will not be stored up or hoarded, but her gain will*

*become sufficient food and choice attire for those who dwell in the presence of the LORD.*

The destruction of Tyre will not be forever. After Babylon ruled over Tyre for seventy years (verse 15; Eze 29:17-18; Jer 29:10), the LORD will allow a restoration for Tyre. The way this is expressed is based on the idea that Tyre is a harlot who has been playing the harlot by her commerce with the nations. In the song of the harlot, Tyre goes back to her lovers to draw attention to herself again and lure them into trading with her as an attractive trading partner (verses 16-17). It is not trade as such that is condemned, but the way trade is conducted and the merchandise. Often trading involves literal harlotry, and involves trading in women to serve as prostitutes.

In spite of again abusing the flourishing trade under the permission of the LORD, the LORD will achieve His own purpose with it. An example of this we see in the relationship between Hiram, the king of Tyre, and Solomon (1Kgs 7:13-14). Also after the return of a remnant from Babylon to Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon contribute to the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 3:7). Soon, however, their striving for profit prevailed again (Neh 13:16).

Her harlot's wages, the proceeds of her sinful trade, shall be holy to the LORD (verse 18). This will happen in the realm of peace. Then "the daughter of Tyre [will come] with a gift" (Psa 45:12a). That gift, and all that Tyre has earned with her trade, will be used by Him "for those who dwell in the presence the LORD". His people will saturate themselves with the food of the nations and will dress themselves with the graceful garments of the nations. The riches of the nations will be brought to His people (Isa 60:5; Psa 72:10-11).

One day, all the glory of the earth will be detached from the power of sin to which it is now subject and attached. In that time, the time of the realm of peace, everything, including the world economy, will contribute to the glory of the King of kings and will be enjoyed as an inheritance by those who live in fellowship with the LORD.

## Isaiah 24

### Introduction

The previous chapters give an account of the acts of God with the individual nations north, east, and south of Israel. This chapter describes God's judgment on western nations, including Israel, at "the end of the age" (Mt 24:3). It is the time when He, to Whom "authority has been given ... in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18), will return to purify His kingdom (Mt 13:41), after which He will establish His kingdom on earth.

The individual nations in Isaiah 13-23 show the different states in which the world as alienated from God has manifested itself. This happens under the influence of and guided by spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Thus *Babylon* represents the (Christian) religious system of corruption and oppression over the whole earth. The people of God are thereby imprisoned.

2. In *Assyria* we see the (islamic?) enmity against God's people.
3. *Philistia* is the constant enemy not outside, but in the land. They stand for professing Christianity.
4. *Moab* stands for human proudness and pride.
5. *Damascus* is the enemy of God's people, but united with the apostate part of this people against the faithful part.
6. In *Dumah* or *Edom* we see the self-confidence of man, his independence, who from that position mocks God's people and deals with them.
7. *Jerusalem* stands for lip confession.
8. *Tyre* stands for the glory of the world.
9. *Egypt* is the world that boasts of its wisdom, but whose wisdom has been lost.

From all these enemies God's people will be delivered, as well as from all that is on earth and also from the spiritual forces of wickedness in the

heavenly places and kings of the earth. But first the prophetic earth will be purified. By 'prophetic earth' is meant that part of the earth which is mentioned in the prophecies. The prophetic earth is the part of the earth that is most responsible toward God because there the light of the gospel has shone longest and brightest. In our time, however, it is becoming increasingly clear how this gospel is being rejected especially there (2Thes 2:10). It is the part of the earth that the Lord calls His (earthly) kingdom (Mt 13:41), in which wheat and tares grow up together.

We recognize the Christian western world in this. This earthly kingdom is purified: all stumbling blocks are removed and the tares are gathered up and burned with fire (cf. Mt 13:40-41). In this way the prophetic earth will be purified in this chapter and room will be made for the establishment of God's kingdom. All hostile powers will undergo Divine repayment on the day of the LORD as announced in this chapter.

Much of it is reminiscent of the judgments in the book of Revelation. That is why the section of Isaiah 24-27 is also called 'the Revelation in miniature' or 'the Apocalypse of Isaiah'. There is also a clear connection with Jeremiah 4, where these judgments are also described (Jer 4:23-31).

### **Isa 24:1-3 | Judgment Affects the Whole Earth**

*1 Behold, the LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants. 2 And the people will be like the priest, the servant like his master, the maid like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the lender like the borrower, the creditor like the debtor. 3 The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the LORD has spoken this word.*

The explanation of this section depends on the translation of the Hebrew word *eret*. It can be translated by 'land', i.e. the land of Israel. It can also be translated by 'earth'. In the second case it is about the judgment on the earth. Because Matthew 24 (Mt 24:38-41) connects this part with the deluge, we choose as to the explanation for the translation by 'earth'. The parallel between 'earth' and 'world' in verse 4 of this chapter supports this choice.

However, we must bear in mind that this is the prophetic earth in contrast to the prophetic sea of the nations. We have to think of the prophetic earth



in relation to those who did not accept the love of the truth, i.e. the western, (ex-)Christian world, especially Europe. By the prophetic sea of nations we mean nations that have no connection with God, but turn against Him and His people.

Everything that characterizes the world will in the end time experience the judgment that is foretold in the opening verses of this chapter. Here the LORD does not use human instruments, but executes the judgment Himself (cf. Isa 13:9-12; Jude 1:14-15) and by His angels (cf. Mt 13:41,49). Everything is distorted (verse 1).

We go back, as it were, to the beginning of creation, that the earth is formless and void (Gen 1:2). The world again becomes waste and empty, now through the judgment of God. Because of this, just as in the beginning, a new heaven and a new earth can be created by Him (Isa 65:17). That is the realm of peace.

It is “the hour of testing, that [hour] which is about to come upon the whole world” (Rev 3:10). What happened at the deluge (Gen 6:7,17) will happen again when the LORD judges the earth. People will not find support together to resist or endure God’s judgments. Everyone will be alone in his misery.

All earthlings will be judged. There will be no distinction in spiritual or social status (verse 2; Rom 2:11), all layers of the population will be affected. The earth will be stripped of all its beauty. A mourning clothing, as it were, will be laid over it (verse 3). That this judgment will surely affect the whole earth is confirmed with the words “the LORD has spoken this word”.

### Isa 24:4-6 | The Cause of Judgment

*4 The earth mourns [and] withers, the world fades [and] withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away. 5 The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.*

Then what is already true for faith becomes visible, namely “that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together” (verse 4; Rom

8:22). Also the people, and among them especially the exalted ones, will lose all their glory.

There is talk of “earth” and “world”. ‘Earth’ usually refers to the area where God’s government becomes visible. That area is also called the ‘prophetic earth’ because that is what the prophecies refer to. With ‘world’ the same area is meant here, but as the area where man reveals himself in his state of alienation from God.

In verse 5 is the reason for the judgments. Man is the cause of it (Rom 8:20). God has subjected His creation to general laws and statutes that count as an eternal covenant between Him and His creation (Gen 9:8-10,16). Man can never ignore and change them with impunity (Dan 7:23-26). Above all, this applies to Israel, God’s people, whom He has made clear in a peculiar way how to receive His blessing. But Israel has transgressed His law and broken His covenant (Jer 11:10; Deu 31:16,20).

Man is more concerned about soil and air pollution than about the much more tragic and profound pollution of his own morality. The latter pollution is at least as widespread and serious as it was in the eighth century BC, in the days of Isaiah. God’s general institutions for the co-existence of people are being broken down one by one (cf. Dan 7:23-25). The judgments of which being “burned” is a picture (Rev 19:20; 21:8), which follow all this forsaking of the LORD and His ordinances, will thin out the population of the earth (verse 6; cf. Mt 24:22).

### **Isa 24:7-13 | All Joy Is Gone**

7 *The new wine mourns,  
The vine decays,  
All the merry-hearted sigh.*  
8 *The gaiety of tambourines ceases,  
The noise of revelers stops,  
The gaiety of the harp ceases.*  
9 *They do not drink wine with song;  
Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.*  
10 *The city of chaos is broken down;  
Every house is shut up so that none may enter.*

11 *There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine;  
 All joy turns to gloom.  
 The gaiety of the earth is banished.*  
 12 *Desolation is left in the city  
 And the gate is battered to ruins.*  
 13 *For thus it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples,  
 As the shaking of an olive tree,  
 As the gleanings when the grape harvest is over.*

“New wine” and “vine”, symbols of joy, do not yield fruit. There is no cause of joy, any joy is gone (verses 7-9). The musical instruments expressing joy are silent (cf. Rev 18:22). The city – probably Babylon – offers a sight of cheerless desolation (verse 10). When you walk through the streets you hear only wailing because joy and cheerfulness have perished because of the judgments (verse 11).

What’s left is a ruin. The gate that used to be guarded is battered (verse 12). The city no longer offers any protection. What applies to the city applies to the entire (prophetic) earth, the current western civilization. The judgments have brought in their lugubrious harvest (cf. Rev 14:14-20). The wine harvest corresponds with the final judgment. What remains is only a human being here and there, just as an olive or a grape is left here and there after a harvest (verse 13; Isa 17:6).

### **Isa 24:14-16 | Glory to the Righteous One**

14 *They raise their voices, they shout for joy;  
 They cry out from the west concerning the majesty of the LORD.*  
 15 *Therefore glorify the LORD in the east,  
 The name of the LORD, the God of Israel,  
 In the coastlands of the sea.*  
 16 *From the ends of the earth we hear songs, “Glory to the Righteous One,”  
 But I say, “Woe to me! Woe to me! Alas for me!  
 The treacherous deal treacherously,  
 And the treacherous deal very treacherously.”*

Amidst the intensely sad sight of the judgments that will strike the earth, Isaiah suddenly hears jubilation (verse 14). It is the jubilation of the rem-

nant of verse 13. This is the remnant of the ten tribes returning to Israel from all nations. They have repented in that time and sing of the majesty of the LORD that can be seen in the judgments. He is the Righteous One in all that He does, also in the judgments. Everything He does is cause for praise.

The LORD is glorified “in the east [literally: region of light]”, which are the nations where the fire of His judgment lights up (verse 15). By this is meant especially the east (of the prophetic earth), while by “the coastlands of the sea” is meant the west. His judgments are to be applauded for the cleansing work they do. This frees the earth from sinners and enables the Lord Jesus to establish His kingdom of peace.

In order to support his faith, Isaiah may look beyond the judgments to the wonderful end result. The whole earth to the extreme end will sing “glory to the Righteous One”, that is the Lord Jesus, with psalms (verse 16a; cf. Rev 15:3-4). Not only are His judgments righteous, but also the realm of peace that follows is based on righteousness.

After the encouraging interlude, Isaiah is impressed again by the misery that will befall his people, yes, all the inhabitants of the earth, especially in the great tribulation under the rule of the antichrist. Isaiah grieves about this and is full of horror (verse 16b). He speaks on behalf of the faithful remnant of the two tribes that have been in the great tribulation: “Woe to me! Woe to me! Alas for me!” That deep they are oppressed by the “treacherous”, that is, the antichrist and the apostate Jews.

He talks twice about “treacherous” actions. The first treacherous act is that Israel turns away from the LORD and accepts the antichrist (Jn 5:43b). The second treacherous act is when the antichrist casts off his mask and tries to wipe out the remnant, the believing Jews. Thus they fill up the measure of their sins (cf. 1Thes 2:16).

### **Isa 24:17-20 | Nowhere Protection or Hold**

*17 Terror and pit and snare*

*Confront you, O inhabitant of the earth.*

*18 Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit,  
And he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare;*

*For the windows above are opened, and the foundations of the earth shake.*

*19 The earth is broken asunder,*

*The earth is split through,*

*The earth is shaken violently.*

*20 The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard*

*And it totters like a shack,*

*For its transgression is heavy upon it,*

*And it will fall, never to rise again.*

In verses 17-22 Isaiah describes the woes of the end time and compares them to pitfalls in which animals end up. The final judgments are foretold about the nations that are under the satanic rule of the beast and the false prophet (Rev 13:1,11). The judgment comes on the “inhabitants of the earth”. In God’s Word these are always unbelievers (Rev 3:10), especially those of the prophetic earth, the Christian West. They are people who consider the earth as their home, who feel at home on earth, who stick to the earth as it were because they have all their interests there. There is no thought whatsoever about heaven or God.

There is nowhere any safety. Man will be like hunted game. In his wild flee he will fall into a pit. If he succeeds in freeing himself from that pit, a new terror awaits him, the snare (verses 17-18; cf. Amos 5:19; 9:1-4). As with the deluge, the heavens break open so that awesome masses of water fall to the earth (Gen 7:11). The heavens above him breathe with menace and nothing on earth offers any hold (verses 19-20).

The earth is in tremendous turmoil and will totter dangerously. We can think of a huge earthquake (Rev 16:17-19), but also of the political situation, which will become enormously unstable. All certainty and order will have disappeared. This is the result of the transgression of mankind, as a result of which the heavy burden of the curse has been placed on creation (Rom 8:20). Verse 20 makes it clear that in the realm of peace the Christian West will never be restored.

### **Isa 24:21-22 | Judgment on Heavenly and Earthly Inhabitants**

*21 So it will happen in that day,*

*That the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high,*

*And the kings of the earth on earth.  
22 They will be gathered together  
[Like] prisoners in the dungeon,  
And will be confined in prison;  
And after many days they [will be] punished.*

In verse 21 two groups are mentioned that the LORD will punish. One group is “on high”, which is heaven (cf. Job 16:19; Psa 68:18a). The other group is “on earth”. The first group consists of the evil powers in the heavenly places, the fallen angels (cf. Lk 10:18; Eph 6:12). They have incited the nations to rebel against God. They are thrown out of heaven (Rev 12:7-10).

The second group are the leaders of the rebellious peoples. They are all “the kings of the earth” under the leadership of the beast of the sea, which is the leader of the restored Roman Empire, and the beast of the earth, which is the antichrist, the false king of Israel (Rev 13:1-10,11-18). They have allowed themselves to be deceived by them and are fully responsible for this. They enter the “prison”, which for the demons is the abyss (Rev 20:1-3) and for the kings of the earth, the rulers now in control, the realm of the dead.

They will be confronted with that responsibility. “After many days they [will be] punished” that is, after thousand years, they will stand before the great white throne (verse 22; Rev 20:11-12). The demons will be thrown into hell without any form of trial. We see this distinction in judgment in Revelation 19 (Rev 19:20-21).

### **Isa 24:23 | The LORD Reigns in Jerusalem**

*23 Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed,  
For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,  
And [His] glory will be before His elders.*

All the judgments described above are carried out by Christ at His second coming. After all, the Father “gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is [the] Son of Man” (Jn 5:27). After the judgments He will establish His kingdom (verse 23). He will reign for all eternity from the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2,10), where the sun and moon will no longer be needed

(Rev 21:23-24). He Himself, Who is the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2), will make the sun and moon created by Him fade (Mt 24:29).

The “elders” are the earthly counterparts of the elders we encounter so often in the book of Revelation, the twenty-four elders. They are in Revelation a symbolic representation of the believers of the Old and New Testament. They will share in the glory of the Lord Jesus and reign with Him (Rev 4:4).

It may also be that the expression “glory will be before His elders” means that the elders will see the glory of the Lord Jesus, because He is standing before them (Rev 5:11-14). In that case they are witnesses of His glory, when He stands as the Lamb “on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand” who have been “purchased from the earth” (Rev 14:1,3).

## Isaiah 25

### **Isa 25:1-5 | The Remnant Exalts the LORD**

*1 O LORD, You are my God;  
I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name;  
For You have worked wonders,  
Plans [formed] long ago, with perfect faithfulness.  
2 For You have made a city into a heap,  
A fortified city into a ruin;  
A palace of strangers is a city no more,  
It will never be rebuilt.  
3 Therefore a strong people will glorify You;  
Cities of ruthless nations will revere You.  
4 For You have been a defense for the helpless,  
A defense for the needy in his distress,  
A refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat;  
For the breath of the ruthless  
Is like a [rain] storm [against] a wall.  
5 Like heat in drought, You subdue the uproar of aliens;  
[Like] heat by the shadow of a cloud, the song of the ruthless is silenced.*

It is no wonder that after the revelation of the glory of the Lord Jesus in His reign in the last verse of the previous chapter there is now a hymn of praise. This chapter and most of the following consist of a song of thanksgiving. The song of thanksgiving in this chapter comes from the mouth of Isaiah as the voice of everyone who belongs to the God-fearing remnant after the great tribulation (cf. Isa 12:1-6). It is more the testimony of personal faith in this chapter. In the next chapter the song of praise is no longer individual, but we hear the whole remnant singing, with Isaiah as the choir director, as it were.

The vast majority of the people of Israel, the unbelieving mass, has already been judged by the Assyrians. The antichrist has been dethroned. Then comes the harvest of the prophetic earth (Isa 24:1-4; Rev 14:14-20). What remains in Israel has been purified. This remnant forms the core of the new



Israel. It is the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed. For them “the time has arrived for singing” (Song 2:12).

First there is the grateful acknowledgment that the LORD is their God (verse 1; Hos 2:23; Zec 13:9). It is the expression of the believer who rejoices in his personal relationship with Him. At the same time, it is the spirit of thankfulness that characterizes the whole remnant. They praise God’s faithfulness to His covenant with His earthly people. To give thanks to His Name is to praise Him for the revelation of His Being.

That revelation can be seen in the wonder of judging His enemies. He overthrew the hostile city, the capital of the world empire, Babylon, or the restored Roman Empire (verse 2). “The fortified city” is symbolic of all that man has built up in his pride on earth. God will judge that entire system. The consequence of His judgments, “therefore”, is that “a strong people ... cities of ruthless nations” – Babylon or the restored Roman Empire – will be in awe of what the LORD has done and will forcibly honor Him (verse 3). All proud organizations of people will have perished. And once again the assurance sounds that Babylon will never be rebuilt.

The redeemed remnant gratefully remembers how the LORD was a strength and shelter in the time of the great tribulation and reign of the antichrist (verse 4; Isa 32:2; Psa 61:4). This verse has been and still is a comfort for many believers in trials. When we have gone through a time of great trial, we can also give thanks for His keeping. There is no bitterness in the remnant for what has been done to them. Nor should it be so with us.

The LORD has subdued the uproar of the enemy, He has silenced their chant of victory (verse 5). He has stopped them in His time. Therefore, not all the people perished and some were spared (Mt 24:22).

### **Isa 25:6-9 | All Peoples Share in the Salvation**

*6 The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain;  
A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow,  
[And] refined, aged wine.  
7 And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples,*

*Even the veil which is stretched over all nations.*

*8 He will swallow up death for all time,*

*And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces,*

*And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;*

*For the LORD has spoken.*

*9 And it will be said in that day,*

*"Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us.*

*This is the LORD for whom we have waited;*

*Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."*

The remaining heathen peoples will come to Mount Zion and may share in the feast that the LORD has prepared for Israel (verse 6). The mountain has become a huge court, where a large crowd can gather. That great platform may have been created by the great landslides that struck the earth during the judgments (Rev 6:14; Zec 14:4).

Verse 6 connects to the last verse of Isaiah 24 (Isa 24:23). This banquet is reminiscent of the peace offering, especially in connection with the banquets held on the occasion of the appointment of a king (1Sam 11:15; 2Sam 6:18-19). The wine is a picture of joy (Psa 104:15). There is food and joy of the best kind and in abundance.

We can make a spiritual application here. The "choice pieces with marrow" speak of the rich blessings we have received in Christ, the "unfathomable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). We may thus be spiritually nourished by the Holy Spirit who makes this riches a reality for our hearts. If we nourish ourselves with Christ in this way, we can only rejoice, of which the "refined, aged wine" speaks.

Not only does God give, but He also takes away. The veil of unbelief which satan has cast upon the nations and upon Israel which blinded them (2Cor 4:3-4; 3:13-16) will be swallowed up (verse 7). The counsel of God, which has been hidden from the people for many centuries, is now unveiled, revealed forever. This counsel implies that God in Christ fulfills His purpose to bless the nations through Israel (Col 1:20; Rom 11:11-15). Blinded by satan, the nations still believe all sorts of nonsense, for example, the foolishness of the theory of evolution. The nations still walk "in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding" (Eph 4:17-18).

Death will also have to return its prey. All those who perished after the church's rapture and during the great tribulation will come to life (verse 8; Rev 20:4). Verse 8 is one of the few references in the Old Testament to the resurrection. Modern theologians regard this as a later addition in order to defend their thesis that the idea of resurrection only evolved and came about later in the history of Israel.

Paul does not care about that. He refers to this verse to show that once death will be abolished completely and not only as here for the believers from Israel and the nations (1Cor 15:54). There will be no longer any other consequences of sin such as tears and reproach for God's people (Rev 21:4). Prophetically, this is a reference to the national and spiritual restoration of Israel (Rom 11:15; Isa 26:19; Eze 37:1-14; Dan 12:2-3; Hos 6:2).

The foregoing is reason for a new song of praise. They honor the LORD on Whom they have not hoped in vain. They will come to the acknowledgment that the Lord Jesus is God, that He is Immanuel, 'God with us'. There is every reason to rejoice about the redemption He has given (verse 9). Don't we have at least as much reason to rejoice about our redemption from the power of sin? Where is our jubilation of deliverance?

### **Isa 25:10-12 | Moab Cast to the Dust**

*10 For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain,  
And Moab will be trodden down in his place  
As straw is trodden down in the water of a manure pile.  
11 And he will spread out his hands in the middle of it  
As a swimmer spreads out [his hands] to swim,  
But [the Lord] will lay low his pride together with the trickery of his hands.  
12 The unassailable fortifications of your walls He will bring down,  
Lay low [and] cast to the ground, even to the dust.*

The hand of the LORD rests protecting on "this mountain", which is Mount Zion (verse 10a). This is not the case with Moab, which here represents the whole proud and God-hostile world (Isa 16:6). Moab has always been like a thorn in Israel's flesh. But Moab is now perishing in God's judgment and will no longer pose any threat to God's people (verses 10b-12). The

LORD Himself will remove everything that could spoil the joy of that day of blessing.

Any attempt to evade that judgment will result in a deeper humiliation, until finally there is nothing left of Moab but dust. For us, this judgment on pride is a warning not to become arrogant.

## Isaiah 26

### Introduction

This chapter consists for the most part of the song that the delivered remnant will sing when it enters the millennial peace and blessing. The song is also called: the song of the two cities. In this song the contrast is painted between Jerusalem and Babylon, or Rome, under whose power she suffered. From now on it is not Babylon, but Jerusalem, which may be called “strong city”.

### Isa 26:1-3 | The Song of the City of Jerusalem

*1 In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:*

*“We have a strong city;*

*He sets up walls and ramparts for security.*

*2 “Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter,*

*The one that remains faithful.*

*3 “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace,*

*Because he trusts in You.*

Only redeemed people can sing a song of redemption. Angels are never found singing in the Bible – not even in the fields of Ephrathah at the birth of the Lord Jesus. The first time there is a song in the Bible it is the song of Moses, after Israel is delivered from Egypt (Exo 15:1). Here, in Isaiah 26, we find another song of redemption.

The whole land is called “Judah” (verse 1), because all the power and reign of the Jewish faithful remnant are concentrated in Judah. Jerusalem is “a strong city”, whereby that city does not derive its strength from man, but in which instead of stone walls God’s security is the strength that will serve the city for eternal protection (cf. Isa 60:18; Zec 2:5). It is a strong city because the strong God is there. Judah will sing about that. It is no longer “I”, as in the previous chapter, but “we”, together as a people. The millennial realm of peace is full of singing. The church should also be characterized by singing.

The remnant of Israel, that is, the ten tribes realm that was scattered throughout the world, but is now delivered and converted to the Messiah, is “the righteous people” (verse 2; Isa 60:21). Jerusalem is presented here as a still sparsely populated city, of which the gates open to let those who come from the ends of the earth into the city (Psa 118:20), just as they have opened to let in the Messiah (Psa 24:7-10). This entry will happen under the sinning of the faithful remnant of the two tribes realm.

Verse 3 applies to the members of the delivered nation. It describes their characteristic. They have trusted the LORD and will continue to trust Him, they will be steadfast in their trust. Therefore they have perfect peace, inner peace. What is translated as “perfect peace” is literally “peace, peace” or peace that is truly peace (cf. Isa 57:19).

This applies at all times to those who, instead of being overwhelmed by the difficulties or giving in to the pressure of spiritual enemies and people’s opposition, put their trust in the Lord and direct their thoughts and senses to Him. The resulting peace is not obtained by appropriating it, but is given by God Himself (Phil 4:6-7). It is the peace that marked Christ in His life on earth and of which He says: “My peace I give to you” (Jn 14:27), which means: ‘The peace that is Mine I give to you.’

### **Isa 26:4-7 | The LORD Paves the Way**

4 *“Trust in the LORD forever,  
For in GOD the LORD, [we have] an everlasting Rock.*  
5 *“For He has brought low those who dwell on high, the unassailable city;  
He lays it low, He lays it low to the ground, He casts it to the dust.*  
6 *“The foot will trample it,  
The feet of the afflicted, the steps of the helpless.”*  
7 *The way of the righteous is smooth;*  
O Upright One, make the path of the righteous level.

Those who know the experience of verse 3 can encourage others to always trust in the LORD (verse 4). Such a person has come to know Him as the eternal rock (Deu 32:4a). Here he is more than the LORD, the God Who is faithful to the covenant. He is “GOD the LORD”, *Yah Yahweh*. This is the Name of the LORD from Isaiah 12 (Isa 12:2). The first time this Name is

used is in connection with the revelation of His glory, when He Himself proclaims His Name there: “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Exo 34:6).

This compassionate and gracious God is for Israel and for every believer “an everlasting rock”. He is not only the faithful God of the covenant, but also the compassionate and gracious God. Whoever builds his house of life on Him remains standing as if on a rock.

Verse 5 gives the reason to trust the LORD and the proof of His power. He casts down every resistance, no matter how high and great. By “those who dwell on high, the unassailable city” are meant Babylon and its inhabitants (Revelation 17-18). He gives His people, the remnant, “the afflicted” and “the helpless,” the strength to stand in that victory and to set foot on the opponents cast down (verse 6).

The way of the righteous has been smoothed and he can now follow a levelled path (verse 7). The smoothness of the way is determined by the sincerity of the one who walks on it. He himself determines its quality and structure. And in response the LORD levels the path. He removes the bends, as it were. The righteous goes the path that the true Righteous also goes, he walks in fellowship with Him. The God of the righteous is Himself the Righteous or the Upright One.

The word “smooth” is the translation of the Hebrew word *yasar* which means “righteous” or “upright”. It is also used for

1. God’s words: “For the word of the LORD is upright” [*yasar*]” (Psa 33:4);
2. God’s judgments: “And upright [*yasar*] are Your judgments” (Psa 119:137);
3. God’s ways: “For all His ways are just [*yasar*]” (Deu 32:4).

There is also a reference in God’s Word to a book with the title: “The book of Jashar [*yasar*]” (Jos 10:13; 2Sam 1:18). That is a title borrowed from Him Who is the Upright One.

### **Isa 26:8-9 | The Desire of the Soul of the God-fearing**

| 8 Indeed, [while following] the way of Your judgments, O LORD,

*We have waited for You eagerly;  
Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of [our] souls.  
9 At night my soul longs for You,  
Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently;  
For when the earth experiences Your judgments  
The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.*

Even when the judgments of the great tribulation went over the earth, they, that is the believing remnant, waited for Him (verse 8). The Jews never looked forward to Divine intervention by rapturing them to meet their Messiah in the air. They have looked forward to Him as Someone Who comes to earth to judge their enemies in order to deliver them and then give them the promised blessings in their land. They now experience how God rewards this patience.

They did not just wait for their deliverance, but for the honor of His “Name” for which they also prayed according to the word of the Lord Jesus: “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name’” (Mt 6:9). His Name He has attached to His promises. They have expected that He will fulfill those promises. His Name is everything His Person contains.

His “memory” has also been the object of the desires of their souls. This means that they have remembered His deeds, that in the past He so often has given salvation to His people. This has given them confidence for the future. The desire of their souls is focused on Him, on His Person and His deeds.

During the night of judgments that mean tribulation for the faithful, yes, to the faithful remnant of Israel it is ‘the great tribulation’, they have longed for Him (verse 9a). They have learned to seek Him with a serious longing. This is always the answer of the trusting soul in times of trial.

Thus, in the present time, the church may gather in His Name (Mt 18:20) and gather in remembrance of Him (1Cor 11:23-25). Then the believers think of Him and of His work that He once accomplished for them on the cross. They also think ahead of the moment He comes (1Cor 11:26). When we think of the work He once did, making everything right, this works trust for the future.



The unbelieving people on earth, who are blind to the righteousness of God, will only learn God's righteousness through His judgments on the day of the LORD (verse 9b). They will then become acquainted with it. The faithful have insight in the judgments of the LORD. They say that His judgments strike the *earth*. With "the earth" is often meant the limited area where God's order reigns. That is the western world that has been Christian, and also Israel. When that order is not taken into account, His judgments come on that area.

The effect of these judgments is for a much larger area, because through these judgments "the inhabitants of the world" learn what righteousness is. By "the world" here is meant the unlimited area, wherever people live, regardless of whether or not He commanded ordinances there.

### Isa 26:10-11 | The Wicked Is Devoured

*10 [Though] the wicked is shown favor,  
He does not learn righteousness;  
He deals unjustly in the land of uprightness,  
And does not perceive the majesty of the LORD.  
11 O LORD, Your hand is lifted up [yet] they do not see it.  
They see [Your] zeal for the people and are put to shame;  
Indeed, fire will devour Your enemies.*

The wicked one ignores all judgments, he does not let himself be warned by them, he does not repent. By "the wicked" (singular) is usually meant the antichrist. The hardening of the wicked is so great that even if there were to be an offer of grace, he would reject it (verse 10). He lives in a land of uprightness, that is Judah, but he does not act accordingly. It is not because of the circumstances, but because of the incorrigible wickedness of man. A favorable environment works nothing out if the heart is not directed toward God. Even though the wicked has learned God's righteousness in judgment, he does not get to know the essence of righteousness. He remains a declared adversary of God and His people.

God's hand is threateningly lifted up (verse 11) to strike those who have committed themselves to the wicked, that is, all the wicked who have chosen the antichrist (Jn 5:43). But they are blind to the threat, they do not

want to see it. However, the moment irrevocably comes when they will realize that God's fire has devoured them because of their opposition. Then it is forever too late to repent.

The Lord Jesus speaks about a rich man who is in everlasting pain (Lk 16:19-31). This man does not ask for deliverance from Hades. He does wish that others will not end up there (Lk 16:28). The Lord then points out that only God's Word can convince someone to repent (Lk 16:31).

### **Isa 26:12 | Peace for the God-fearing**

*12 LORD, You will establish peace for us,  
Since You have also performed for us all our works.*

Opposite the terrible fate of the wicked and all who have followed him, is the portion of the faithful remnant. On the wicked came fire (verse 11), on the remnant comes peace now that the LORD is in the land (verse 12). It is the peace which the LORD possesses, not a peace which they themselves have worked out. It is the perfect peace, the peace which is real peace, which the LORD gives to those who trust in Him (verse 3).

For peace with God, He accomplished the work all by Himself through His Son. Through faith in the Son and His work on the cross, they have peace in their hearts in view of their sins. He has also done everything necessary for their peace on earth through their deliverance from the hand of their enemies, even though He has enabled them to help Him. They say of their contribution that He has done it for them (cf. Eph 2:10). Through that work they live in peaceful circumstances on earth and there is no longer a hostile power that can disturb this peace.

### **Isa 26:13-15 | Remembrance of Unfaithfulness and Grace**

*13 O LORD our God, other masters besides You have ruled us;  
[But] through You alone we confess Your name.  
14 The dead will not live, the departed spirits will not rise;  
Therefore You have punished and destroyed them,  
And You have wiped out all remembrance of them.  
15 You have increased the nation, O LORD,  
You have increased the nation, You are glorified;*

| *You have extended all the borders of the land.*

They confess the “LORD” as “our God”. With this they express the restoration of the relationship with Him. In the Person of the once rejected Son of God they now acknowledge the LORD their God. From that restored relationship they think back to the time that other nations ruled them (verse 13), that is during “the times of the Gentiles”, as the Lord Jesus calls that time (Lk 21:24). The cause of this is that they started to serve other gods (Hebrew *ba'alenu* = rule us; this verb is related to the word *ba'al* that points to the idols). The nations that rule are still there now because Israel is still dependent on friendly powers. But then that time is over. They then only honor the Name of the LORD.

The nations that have ruled them will not revive (verse 14). They are defeated forever and will never oppress God’s people again. They will not even be thought of again. [N.B. They will rise once physically, but that will be to be judged forever (Jn 5:28-29).] Opposite this, there is the multiplication of God’s people (verse 15; Isa 9:2). This will be for the glorification of the LORD (Pro 14:28a). In view of that multiplication, the borders of the land have been removed and widened to “all the borders of the land” (cf. Isa 54:2-3). It is the fulfillment of God’s land vows to Abraham (Gen 13:14-17).

### **Isa 26:16-18 | The Distress of the Remnant**

*16 O LORD, they sought You in distress;  
They could only whisper a prayer,  
Your chastening was upon them.  
17 As the pregnant woman approaches [the time] to give birth,  
She writhes [and] cries out in her labor pains,  
Thus were we before You, O LORD.  
18 We were pregnant, we writhed [in labor],  
We gave birth, as it seems, [only] to wind.  
We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth,  
Nor were inhabitants of the world born.*

These verses describe the deep anxieties and entreaties of the God-fearing in Israel during the “distress,” which is the time of the antichrist’s reign

of terror, the time of the great tribulation, “the time of Jacob’s distress” (Jer 30:7). They remember their extreme helplessness to free themselves or others. They acknowledge that for them it has been a chastisement of the LORD (verse 16). They have been so impressed that they have not shouted in their distress, but “could only whisper a prayer”. Their distress was not only caused by the foreign domination, but also by the grief for their sins. Distress is often the reason for people to seek God. This is prophetically illustrated by the brothers of Joseph who repent in prison (Gen 42:17-22).

They realize that before the LORD they have suffered the pains of someone in labor (verse 17). Later they will discover that the Son was born long before the contractions seized them (Isa 66:7). All the pains seemed at first glance to be in vain as well, for no child was born, but only wind, nothing. They were not able to give salvation, nor was there any enlarging of the people through new births (verse 18).

### **Isa 26:19 | Faith in the Resurrection**

*19 Your dead will live;  
Their corpses will rise.  
You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy,  
For your dew [is as] the dew of the dawn,  
And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.*

Verse 19 is the answer to the confession of the previous verse. It puts us back in the time of Isaiah. The song of praise just sung in faith contains a great encouragement for faith, namely that God keeps His promises. He does so in the resurrection (Heb 11:39-40). Here we find the truth of the resurrection in the Old Testament (cf. Job 19:25-27).

Thinking about the resurrection in the future gives strength to live today from faith in the future. In this faith Isaiah calls for rejoicing, because unlike the dead oppressors (verse 14) the pious will rise from the dead. Isaiah speaks to the LORD about “Your dead”. They are “the dead in Christ” (1Thes 4:16), “the dead who die in the Lord” (Rev 14:13). Unlike Isaiah 25, where we find a wonderful reference to the resurrection (Isa 25:8), this is about the resurrection of Israel as a people.

Possibly Isaiah by “Your dead” means the revival of the lost and dead ten tribes of Israel and by “my corpse”, as it also can be translated, he means the restoration of the people of Israel as a whole (Hos 6:2). Israel will rise from the dead as it were (Eze 37:1-10; Dan 12:2; Rom 11:15). This happens when the LORD re-establishes the connection with His people, a connection that has not been definitively broken, but temporarily interrupted.

The dew is a picture of blessing, refreshment and life-giving power. Thus is the LORD for His people (Hos 14:6a). Dew, which means the newly formed remnant of His people (Mic 5:6a; Psa 110:3), belongs to the dawn of the day, to the light. Night and death are over. Life has been given back to those who “lie in the dust”, to those with whom hardly anything of life could be seen anymore. “The earth will give birth to the departed spirits”, life can emerge from the dead and grow and blossom undisturbed and come to full maturity as a fruit to the glory of the LORD. The acceptance of the remnant is nothing but life from the dead (Rom 11:15).

### **Isa 26:20-21 | A Little While of Indignation**

*20 Come, my people, enter into your rooms  
And close your doors behind you;  
Hide for a little while  
Until indignation runs [its] course.  
21 For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place  
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;  
And the earth will reveal her bloodshed  
And will no longer cover her slain.*

Until the indignation is over (Zep 3:8), the LORD offers His people – the faithful remnant, the one hundred and forty-four thousand (Rev 7:1-8) – shelter. That shelter is for protection against His indignation which must rage for a little while, at the end of the three and a half years of great tribulation (verse 20; Dan 12:12). Evil on earth, “the iniquity”, especially of His apostate people directed against the faithful of His people, compels Him “to come out from His place” (verse 21). Heaven will open and He will appear on earth to judge (Rev 19:11-16). All sins will be brought to light.

This judgment is a foreshadowing of the last judgment, when also the dead will be judged (Rev 20:11-15). Then all unsolved murders will be solved. What to think of the millions killed by Stalin and Hitler, for example. Also all other forms of injustice that have never been punished will be brought to light. Criminals who committed suicide after committing their crimes will no longer be covered by the earth. All will be summoned to the great white throne and will be judged in accordance with their iniquity. Righteousness will come and prevail. Christ, the Righteous, has the last word.

## Isaiah 27

### **Isa 27:1 | The Great Opponent Killed**

*1 In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,  
With His fierce and great and mighty sword,  
Even Leviathan the twisted serpent;  
And He will kill the dragon who [lives] in the sea.*

This chapter can be divided into three parts (verses 1,2-11,12-13), each beginning with “in that day”, which is the day the LORD comes to purify the earth of evil by judgment. In verse 1 the judgment of God on the world reaches its climax and according to its content belongs to the judgment announced in Isaiah 26 (Isa 26:21).

It may be that in verse 1 there are three monsters; it may also be a three-headed monster (cf. Psa 74:13-14). Two of the monsters are called “Leviathan” (Job 41:1-34).

The first one is called “the fleeing serpent”. This is Assyria. The Tigris, the river in northern Iraq, is a fast flowing river. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, is located on the Tigris.

The second one is called “the twisted serpent”. The Euphrates is the twisting river in southern Iraq, where the capital Babylon is located.

The third monster, “the dragon”, is “in the sea”. This is Egypt (cf. Isa 51:9). The sea is usually a picture of the nations, but here possibly also an indication of the Nile. It is the world powers that play a significant role in the history and prophecies of Israel.

In the serpent and the dragon, we can also see the evil power behind the scenes, that one “great dragon ..., the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan” (Rev 12:9a). God will definitely deal with this power and his demonic companions.

### **Isa 27:2-5 | The LORD Protects His Vineyard Israel**

| *2 In that day,*

*"A vineyard of wine, sing of it!*

*3 "I, the LORD, am its keeper;*

*I water it every moment.*

*So that no one will damage it,*

*I guard it night and day.*

*4 "I have no wrath.*

*Should someone give Me briars [and] thorns in battle,*

*[Then] I would step on them, I would burn them completely.*

*5 "Or let him rely on My protection,*

*Let him make peace with Me,*

*Let him make peace with Me."*

Since the destruction of these monsters – or the monstrous manifestations of one monster – by the LORD is absolutely certain, another prophetic song sounds in which the joy of redeemed Israel is expressed (verse 2). It is the joy of the LORD over His people. They are a vineyard which He does not entrust to others who are unfaithful (Mt 21:33-39), but which He Himself constantly protects and waters (verse 3). This song is a continuation of the song about the vineyard in Isaiah 5 (Isa 5:1-7). At the same time, this vineyard is in sharp contrast with that vineyard.

His wrath is over because there is nothing left to become angry about (verse 4). His people answer to His purpose. If enemies would rise up against His people, He would burn like fire and consume those enemies like briars and thorns. God stands up for His vineyard. Whoever wants to attack that vineyard will have to deal with Him. The enemies do better to make peace with Him (verse 5). Peace with Him can be made through faith in the Lord Jesus (Rom 5:1). Then they will escape His anger (cf. Psa 2:12), because even in His wrath He remembers mercy (Hab 3:2).

### **Isa 27:6-9 | Israel Will Blossom and Sprout**

*6 In the days to come Jacob will take root,*

*Israel will blossom and sprout,*

*And they will fill the whole world with fruit.*

*7 Like the striking of Him who has struck them, has He struck them?*

*Or like the slaughter of His slain, have they been slain?*

*8 You contended with them by banishing them, by driving them away.*



*With His fierce wind He has expelled [them] on the day of the east wind.*

*9 Therefore through this Jacob's iniquity will be forgiven;*

*And this will be the full price of the pardoning of his sin:*

*When he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones;*

*[When] Asherim and incense altars will not stand.*

When the Assyrians are finally destroyed, when the indignation is over, Israel will blossom and sprout and produce fruits that will be a blessing for the whole world (verse 6). This is the beginning of the realm of peace. Thus they will literally be the “riches for the Gentiles” (Rom 11:12). Spiritually, this is God’s purpose and desire for the believers in the present age, until the church is complete (Jn 15:1-16). Filling the earth with fruit represents the consequences of missionary work among all nations (Rom 15:16).

The LORD had to strike His people, but He did not do so in the way He has struck the people who have struck His people (verse 7). He has struck His people “in measure” (Darby Translation) and not in the fullness of His wrath (verse 8; Psa 118:18). In that case He would have wiped them completely from the earth. Now He has contended with His people by expelling them with the breath of His mouth, scattering them all over the earth. The wind purifies the harvest as it were, just as it does when the wheat is shaken and sifted. His purpose in doing so has been to forgive their iniquities and pardon their sins completely (verse 9).

The full fruit of this action of the LORD is that all idols are pulverized and hewn down. Everything they have given the place of the LORD, they have removed, so that Ephraim will say: “What more have I to do with idols?” (Hos 14:8a).

### **Isa 27:10-11 | Consequences of the Wrath for Jerusalem**

*10 For the fortified city is isolated,*

*A homestead forlorn and forsaken like the desert;*

*There the calf will graze,*

*And there it will lie down and feed on its branches.*

*11 When its limbs are dry, they are broken off;*

*Women come [and] make a fire with them,*

*For they are not a people of discernment,*

*Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them.*

*And their Creator will not be gracious to them.*

The discipling hand of the LORD will work that Israel will repent. Verses 10-11 show what that discipline means. The once strong and populated Jerusalem will seem a forsaken wilderness (verse 10). This is the result of the (first) attack of the Assyrians or the king of the North (cf. Zec 13:8-9). In the middle of the ruins the cattle will find some greenery. After some time, the branches that are eaten bare will be dry enough to light a fire to cook or fry what is still edible (verse 11).

The cause of this situation is their lack of knowledge (Hos 4:6), which led them to follow the antichrist (Jn 5:43b). It is a guilty lack of knowledge. They are to blame for turning their back on their “Maker” and for forgetting their “Creator”. In doing so, they have closed themselves off to His compassion and grace. In this way they have made it impossible for Him to have compassion on them and to be gracious to them (2Chr 36:16).

### **Isa 27:12-13 | The LORD Gathers Up His people**

*12 In that day the LORD will start [His] threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. 13 It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.*

In these verses we see that “mercy triumphs over judgment” (Jam 2:13). God always sees an opportunity to have mercy. That is along the path of conversion and repentance that He works in His people. When the threshing of His people – Judah, the two tribes realm – is finished and the chaff is separated from the wheat, He gathers the rest of His people (verse 12; cf. Mt 24:31). He does this by gathering up the members of His people – the ten tribes realm – one by one. The few do not disappear in the mass. Not one will be left behind or forgotten. He will gather them all from between the Euphrates and the promised land.

He will call the lost ten tribes to His land by “a great trumpet” from all nations (verse 13; Mt 24:31). It is the consummation of the resurrection of

Israel buried for so long. This is the great year of jubilee when, on the day of atonement, every member of the people will regain his possessions (Lev 25:9,13). Peter calls it the “period of restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). When they have returned to the land, their first act will be to “come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem”, together with their brothers from the two tribes realm.

## Isaiah 28

### **Introduction**

### **Overview main part 1.3 – Isaiah 28-35**

### **God and His people**

The third part of the first main part (Isaiah 1-35) contains Isaiah 28-35 and can be divided as follows:

1. Woe to Samaria (Isaiah 28)
2. Woe to Ariel (Isaiah 29)
3. Woe to the rebellious children (Isaiah 30)
4. Woe to those who seek the help of Egypt (Isaiah 31)
5. The kingdom of God (Isaiah 32)
6. Woe to the destroyer (Isaiah 33)
7. Judgment on the world and Edom (Isaiah 34)
8. Blessing for God's people (Isaiah 35)

Like the previous parts, Isaiah 1-12 and Isaiah 13-27, this part begins with the judgment of God and continues to the realm of peace. It also ends with a song of praise and an enumeration of the blessings of the realm of peace.

### **Introduction on Isaiah 28**

Isaiah 28-29 introduce a series of prophecies. Prophetically, we find here the two attacks (Dan 11:39-44) of the Assyrians in the time of God's indignation. After the final destruction of the Assyrians, the realm of peace is established.

This prophetic part finds its historical pre-fulfillment in the fall of Samaria (2Kgs 17:1-5,22-23).

### **Isa 28:1-4 | Woe to Samaria**

| 1 Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim,

*And to the fading flower of its glorious beauty,  
 Which is at the head of the fertile valley  
 Of those who are overcome with wine!  
 2 Behold, the Lord has a strong and mighty [agent];  
 As a storm of hail, a tempest of destruction,  
 Like a storm of mighty overflowing waters,  
 He has cast [it] down to the earth with [His] hand.  
 3 The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim is trodden under foot.  
 4 And the fading flower of its glorious beauty,  
 Which is at the head of the fertile valley,  
 Will be like the first-ripe fig prior to summer,  
 Which one sees,  
 [And] as soon as it is in his hand,  
 He swallows it.*

This chapter introduces a new series of woes. In Isaiah 5 we hear a “woe” six times, and now there are six more until Isaiah 33. The first five are to Israel and especially to Judah and Jerusalem. The sixth is about Assyria. The “woe” is pronounced over God’s people for forsaking the LORD. It is about the wicked of Israel. They put their trust in Egypt rather than in the LORD. In the end time they will put their trust in their king, the antichrist, and the covenant with the beast, the coming leader of the restored Roman Empire, the united states of Europe.

This chapter can be divided into three sections:

1. verses 1-13,
2. verses 14-22,
3. verses 23-29.

The first section describes the degenerated condition of the leaders in Israel at that time. In the first verses Samaria is openly denounced. As the capital of the ten tribes realm, the city is called “the proud crown”, on which drunken Ephraim boasts (verse 1). The inhabitants of Samaria live in luxurious complacency. The city, lying on a mountain and therefore seen as “at the head”, is compared to a “fading flower”, which gives the picture of glory that is decaying. The background of this prophecy is the

pre-fulfillment when Samaria is besieged for three years and finally destroyed by the Assyrians (2Kgs 17:5).

They use the fertility of the valley, to which the city lies as a head ornament, to satisfy their own needs (cf. Amos 4:1). It makes them drunk and therefore insensitive to the word of God through His prophets. All this the LORD will strike with His judgment. Assyria will be the instrument through which the LORD will carry out the judgment. Assyria can be identified here with the coming king of the North, the alliance of North Arab countries (Psa 83:5-8), islamic countries with the support of Gog (cf. Dan 8:24). Assyria is presented again as “mighty overflowing waters” (verse 2; Isa 8:7).

Assyria will overrun Samaria and tread their pride underfoot (verse 3). He will do so with the greatest ease. The city will be judged as “the fading flower” (verse 4). It will be casually done with the speed with which one sees an early fig, plucks it, puts it in the mouth and swallows it, and it is no longer there. We would say: bite, swallow, disappeared. These verses are fulfilled in 622 BC.

In this section we are warned not to place our trust in our prosperity. We may enjoy what the Lord gives us, but He requires us to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness (Mt 6:33). After all, we have received it from Him. If we acknowledge that, we will want to honor Him with what He has entrusted to us. Then we will also give to the less fortunate.

Prophetically, this attack (verses 1-6) points to the king of the North’s first attack on Israel (Dan 11:41). By Ephraim is meant the north of Israel that is first attacked by this king. The ten tribes themselves will return after the appearance of the Lord (Mt 24:29-31). From verse 7 it is about the continuation of this attack on Jerusalem.

### **Isa 28:5-6 | Encouragement for the Faithful**

*5 In that day the LORD of hosts will become a beautiful crown  
And a glorious diadem to the remnant of His people;  
6 A spirit of justice for him who sits in judgment,  
A strength to those who repel the onslaught at the gate.*

Here we go to the future, indicated by the expression “in that day” (verse 5). The prophet suddenly moves us to the end time. The threat to the apostates is again followed by the encouragement for the faithful, “the remnant of His people”, for whom the LORD is ever mindful. He will be for them “a beautiful crown and a glorious diadem”. This is a clear and telling contrast with the “proud crown” that Samaria is at the moment of the prophecy of Isaiah and which turns out to be a fading flower (verse 1).

He will also spiritually support this remnant in making the right decisions in lawsuits (verse 6). He will also give their warriors the strength to push the invaded enemy back to the gate and chase them out of the city. This support the remnant needs to rule with the LORD in the regeneration (Mt 19:28), which is in the realm of peace.

This encouragement also applies to all those who want to walk in the fear of the Lord today, the time when apostasy is growing rapidly. They receive wisdom and power from the Lord. We must see to it that we live righteously and gain victories in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Isa 28:7-10 | Drunk Priests and Prophets

*7 And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink:  
The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink,  
They are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink;  
They reel while having visions,  
They totter [when rendering] judgment.  
8 For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a [single clean] place.  
9 “To whom would He teach knowledge,  
And to whom would He interpret the message?  
Those [just] weaned from milk?  
Those [just] taken from the breast?  
10 “For [He says],  
‘Order on order, order on order,  
Line on line, line on line,  
A little here, a little there.’”*

With “these also” (verse 7) Isaiah now speaks about the southern realm of Judah and more specifically about the leaders of Jerusalem, those who

have responsibility among the people (verse 14). They are no better than those of Samaria and even have a greater responsibility and therefore a greater guilt. Isaiah speaks in stronger terms about their deceptive visions and court judgments. In strong words he denounces the debauched lifestyle they lead (verse 8).

Even their tables, i.e. their altars, are terribly polluted by vomit – Hebrew: *kotzen*. It goes against the commandment of the priests: “Do not drink wine or strong drink” (Lev 10:9; Eze 44:21). Nor is it just an incident, but it has become a habit, a lifestyle. Prophetically, Jerusalem will simply fall as they are spiritually in an eclipse of God, intoxicated by the wine of the anti-christ. Therefore, the king of the North will easily push on to Jerusalem.

We hear their bragging reaction in verses 9-10. In Hebrew, these words sound like the chatter of drunken people: “*ki tsav latsav, tsav latsav, kav lakav, kav lakav, ze’ir sham, ze’ir sham*”. Prophetically, these priests and prophets of the Jews are drunk by drinking the wine of the antichrist, so that they lack true knowledge of God and they no longer have any spiritual discernment.

This drunken priest roars to his comrades about Isaiah: ‘Does he come here to lecture us who have knowledge?’ And the drunk prophet, who boasts of having received revelations himself, mockingly says to his feasting brothers about Isaiah: ‘Will he let us know what a revelation means? He certainly thinks we are a bunch of toddlers! He always makes his laws heard, each time he puts his demands on us. Sometimes he talks about this and sometimes he talks about something else. That man always has something to whine about!’

They believe that they are the enlightened intellectuals of their days, while they do not realize that they are indeed foolish and childish. That is why Isaiah speaks to them with clear and understandable language. He does indeed say what they are allowed to do and what not. They are a people of orders and lines, but they have them only in an external sense.

### **Isa 28:11-13 | A Foreign Tongue as Judgment**

| 11 Indeed, He will speak to this people  
| Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue,



*12 He who said to them, "Here is rest, give rest to the weary,"*

*And, "Here is repose," but they would not listen.*

*13 So the word of the LORD to them will be,*

*"Order on order, order on order,*

*Line on line, line on line,*

*A little here, a little there,"*

*That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken captive.*

Because they are not listening, Isaiah continues with an announcement of judgment. If they do not want to listen to the plain language of the prophet, but make scoffing remarks about it, they will be spoken to in an incomprehensible language. This will happen when the armies of Assyria, people who speak a foreign language, will invade the country (verse 11).

Paul quotes verses 11-12 in connection with the speaking in tongues or in languages of which the Corinthians are so proud. But he adds that the languages are a sign for the unbelievers (1Cor 14:21-22a). Those unbelievers turn out to be the Israelites because Paul quotes this verse from Isaiah. With this he means that by this languages it is made clear to the unbelieving Israel that from now on the Lord can be praised in every human language and not only in holy Hebrew.

This means – albeit temporarily – the rejection of Israel as a special people of God. Speaking in tongues or in languages is a sign of judgment and not of blessing. That is the application of this verse. The explanation is that the Assyrians will come and that judgment will come through these people who cannot be understood because they have not listened to God's prophets they have understood.

The wonder and sign of the tongues or the languages also happens on Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5-12). There are many Jews from other countries present. Then they hear in their languages and even dialects about the great deeds of God. For the native Jews it seems to be language of the drunk. Only a small part of the mass, three thousand, comes to faith.

The tongues or the languages are a sign for the unbelieving Jews. It is a sign of judgment. Speaking in tongues or in languages may also be done in the church, if there are (Jewish) unbelievers who speak another language,

but an interpreter must be present, because the church must receive up-building. Only the content builds up the church (1Cor 14:20-28).

The LORD has offered His people rest and repose, but they have no ears (verse 12; Isa 30:15). Therefore, they will be forced to bow to orders and lines in all kinds of fields in submission to an enemy who knows no compassion at all (verse 13). They will simply continue with their outer religion and fall (cf. Zec 14:2).

### **Isa 28:14-19 | A Covenant With Death**

*14 Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers,  
Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem,  
15 Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death,  
And with Sheol we have made a pact.  
The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by,  
For we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception."  
16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD,  
"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,  
A costly cornerstone [for] the foundation, firmly placed.  
He who believes [in it] will not be disturbed.  
17 "I will make justice the measuring line  
And righteousness the level;  
Then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies  
And the waters will overflow the secret place.  
18 "Your covenant with death will be canceled,  
And your pact with Sheol will not stand;  
When the overwhelming scourge passes through,  
Then you become its trampling [place].  
19 "As often as it passes through, it will seize you;  
For morning after morning it will pass through, [anytime] during the day or night,  
And it will be sheer terror to understand what it means."*

After Isaiah spoke about the leaders of Jerusalem in the previous verses, especially the spiritual leaders, he now speaks to the political leaders, "who rule this people who are in Jerusalem" (verse 14). In the future these

will be the government officials of the antichrist. He calls them outright “scoffers,” referring to their earlier remarks (verses 9-10) and draws their attention to the audacity of their foreign policy. Their scoffing has led them to challenge God. Challenging, they report that they have made a “covenant with death”, and that “with Sheol” they have “made a pact”. That is what they count on and not on God. In this is their strength and not in God.

It seems that their politics are as follows. They always have to deal with two hostile superpowers: Egypt in the south and Assyria in the north. They have secretly made a covenant with Egypt – by Isaiah called “death” and “Sheol”, the realm of death – to defend themselves against Assyria (verse 15). They have been warned of an invasion of Assyria (Isa 8:7-8). Through the covenant with Egypt they now feel safe. When Assyria comes as “the overwhelming scourge” – “the rod” (Isa 10:5) –, they have a hiding place. They would rather deliver themselves with skin and hair to lies and deceit than put their trust in the LORD in accordance with the call of Isaiah.

Prophetically, Israel will have to deal with two superpowers. The danger comes from the first, the Assyrians, that is the king of the North, an alliance of Arab Islamic countries (probably shiite), with behind them their powerful ally Gog, that is Russia. In order to defend itself against him, Israel will make an alliance with another superpower, the restored Roman Empire, the united states of Europe. The Word of God calls this covenant a covenant with death and Sheol.

In contrast to the hypocritical and therefore unreliable politics, the God-fearing is pointed to an unshakable foundation (verse 16). Jacob already speaks of this in his blessing for Joseph when he says that the power of Israel comes from “the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob”, Who as his Shepherd is “the Stone of Israel” (Gen 49:24). This stone or rock is none other than Christ, as we know from the apostle Peter who quotes this verse of Isaiah in his first letter (1Pet 2:6).

From Peter we learn that what will be true for the faithful remnant in the last days, is already true for us now. Christ is indeed “a tested stone\*”, what we see in what happened to Him during His first coming and stay on earth. Christ is the living stone unto Whom we, who are dust by nature

(Gen 3:19), may come and be made living stones in connection with Him (1Pet 2:4).

\*Literally, it is “a testing stone” in the sense of a stone that is a standard and touchstone for the other stones. The other stones are formed in His image (see and cf. 2Cor 3:18).

When He comes, it turns out that He is “a costly cornerstone [for] the foundation, firmly placed”, literally “a well-founded foundation” or a solid foundation (cf. Lk 6:46-49). Although He has not yet been revealed in this way, faith already sees it. He is what the unstable man needs.

Whoever believes in Him, whoever puts his trust on this basis, does not make a vain covenant and will not be disturbed, but looks forward to Him, to His coming. The Hebrew verb ‘disturbed’ means ‘hurry away’, crawl away out of shame, because you are ashamed of what you have believed you could trust. The God-fearing “will not be disturbed” (cf. Rom 9:33; 10:11). Christ is always the way to salvation and rescue.

Whoever of the Israelites puts his trust in the power of the beast, which is the restored Roman Empire, will be ashamed. He who puts his trust in Christ, however, will never, ever come out ashamed, he will not rush away from shame. This does not only apply to Israel in the future, but it also applies to us now.

What is a fixed foundation for the believer, means for the unbeliever judgment. When Christ comes to Zion, He will administer justice in a perfectly righteous manner (verse 17). “The measuring line” and “level” are necessary to lay a good foundation. Before Christ can begin His kingdom, all remainders of the work of the antichrist must be removed so that a good foundation can be laid.

Through His judgments of hail and water, He will sweep away the hiding places where lie and the covenant of death are. Hail and water are two pictures that have been used before to describe what the Assyrians work (verse 2), but they are now used to describe the effect of the coming of the LORD into the land.

“The refuge of lies” and “the secret place” will be “swept out” and “overflowed”. “Zion will be plowed as a field” (Mic 3:12). The leaders and the

people will be “trampled” by the “overwhelming scourge” (verse 18). The Assyrians of old have never been able to conquer Jerusalem. This clearly shows that the full fulfillment of these prophecies is yet to come (Zec 13:8; 14:2).

In verse 18, in addition to the immediate judgment, our gaze is also focused on the judgment in the distant future – for us: the near future. In the end time the covenant of verse 15 will find full fulfillment. Death is the antichrist. In him the devil entered who had “the power of death” (Heb 2:14). The “covenant” the wicked mass makes under the leadership of the antichrist is a covenant with death. They have made a “pact” with Sheol, the realm of death. The covenant, with death, is the covenant that the wicked mass of the Jews made through their head, the antichrist, with the restored Roman Empire, that is Europe.

This realm comes from the abyss (Rev 17:8). Satan is the inspirer of it. Because of both connections, the wicked Israel will suffer God’s judgment in a horrible way. God will use “the overwhelming scourge”, that is Assyria, in this case the prophetic king of the North, or an alliance of Arab islamic countries (Dan 11:40-41). The execution of the judgment will take place one after the other, “morning after morning” (verse 19). The leaders, who have refused to listen to the warnings, will then realize to their horror that these are the judgments which they thought would not affect them after all.

### Isa 28:20-22 | The Unusual Task

*20 The bed is too short on which to stretch out,  
And the blanket is too small to wrap oneself in.  
21 For the LORD will rise up as [at] Mount Perazim,  
He will be stirred up as in the valley of Gibeon,  
To do His task, His unusual task,  
And to work His work, His extraordinary work.  
22 And now do not carry on as scoffers,  
Or your fetters will be made stronger;  
For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts  
Of decisive destruction on all the earth.*

They think that by asking Egypt for help they will be able to protect themselves in a comfortable bed, under a comfortable blanket, from danger and will have rest (verse 20). To their dismay, they will discover that their precautions are of no use. On the contrary, the bed will be too short and the blanket too small. There is no rest and no protection outside of the LORD. This is how it is always with every member of God's people: trusting the world will only bring shame, misery and disasters. Faith overcomes. Christ is the firm foundation on which we can build our hope.

The LORD will act against His people with overflowing waters and hail-storm (verse 17), as He did against their enemies in the past (verse 21). At "Mount Perazim" and "in the valley of Gibeon" the LORD has risen up to support David in the first case and Joshua in the second case in their fight against their enemies. He went out before David like the breakthrough of waters (2Sam 5:18-25) and He helped Joshua through large hailstones (Jos 10:1-11). But now He will do an unusual task, an extraordinary work. That is that He will rise up to support the enemies against His people. He will treat His own people as if they were His enemies. They have forced Him to do this, but it will be an unusual act.

Once again the people are called upon to repent of their cynical unbelief (verse 22). If they do not, the bonds of their misery will be tightened even more. The judgment on the whole is determined; it is a destruction of "all the earth [or: land]". The whole land of Israel is plowed (cf. verse 24). For the few who repent there is grace. But furthermore, half of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be taken away in exile by the prophetic Assyrians (Zec 14:2).

To Isaiah it's a done deal, it's sure. He has heard it personally from the Lord GOD of hosts. Therefore there is no doubt that it will go this way.

### **Isa 28:23-29 | The Work of the LORD Is Wise**

*23 Give ear and hear my voice,*

*Listen and hear my words.*

*24 Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed?*

*Does he [continually] turn and harrow the ground?*

*25 Does he not level its surface*

*And sow dill and scatter cummin  
 And plant wheat in rows,  
 Barley in its place and rye within its area?  
 26 For his God instructs and teaches him properly.  
 27 For dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge,  
 Nor is the cartwheel driven over cummin;  
 But dill is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a club.  
 28 [Grain for] bread is crushed,  
 Indeed, he does not continue to thresh it forever.  
 Because the wheel of [his] cart and his horses [eventually] damage [it],  
 He does not thresh it longer.  
 29 This also comes from the LORD of hosts,  
 [Who] has made [His] counsel wonderful and [His] wisdom great.*

The third and last section of this chapter deals with what the LORD has to say to those individuals who have remained faithful in the time of great distress, when they are suffering for the sake of their faithfulness to Him. He speaks to them with a voice familiar to them and with comforting words (verse 23). They are urged to listen attentively: “give ear ... listen” (cf. Mk 4:3,9).

Isaiah uses a parable for his comforting words. He uses the picture of a farmer, as also Paul does (1Cor 3:7-9). The farmer is here a picture of the LORD. His ground represents the people of Israel. The hard ground is the apostate part of the people. The plow are the Assyrians. The different seeds are the scattered tribes of Israel who will be planted again in the land of Israel.

Just as the farmer does not always continue to plow (verse 24), so will the LORD not endlessly scourge. Both plowing and disciplining are not the ultimate goal of the work. The farmer has another goal, a good goal, with the land in mind. So does the LORD. Therefore there is hope in the midst of tribulation. The LORD has a merciful purpose for all and the time of trial will come to an end.

The farmer knows exactly how to cultivate the land for the diverse types of seed and how to sow each kind (verse 25). He does not have this from

himself, but from his God who taught him in nature (verse 26). Why then is man so reluctant to accept God's teaching of spiritual things?

Just as the farmer cultivates the soil differently for the various kinds of seed, he also cultivates the harvest in a different way (verse 27). He threshes the grain, but dill and cumin are too small to thresh. If he did, they would be crushed. So he has to beat them out. And in that he also works with wisdom. He doesn't go on threshing or beating endlessly, he's not out to crush the harvest, because then he destroys it and it's worthless (verse 28).

If the farmer deals with the fruit of his work with so much insight, would not God, Who created him and gave him that insight, act in the same way? The faithful and sorely tried believer may know that the LORD acts with him in the same manner and with the same wisdom. The LORD is concerned with the harvest, the result. With this in mind He works the ground of man's heart with trouble, conviction of sin, sorrow. In it then falls the good seed, with the good fruit as a result.

Therefore, the wise believer exults in tribulation (Rom 5:3), for he knows that the Father is the Vinedresser, who prunes so that he may bring forth more and even much fruit (Jn 15:1-2,8). He who has been trained by discipline receives "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:11).

The LORD does not go on endlessly with discipline. The goal is clearly before Him in all actions with His people. The suffering of the God-fearing has a purpose. That purpose is the purification of his faith, that it may result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1Pet 1:6-7).

Everything is in the hands of "the LORD of hosts" (verse 29). Though it is not always clear to see, faith may trust that He "has made [His] counsel wonderful and [His] wisdom great" (Jer 32:18b-19a). His attention is constantly focused on the remnant He wants to save. In view of them, He acts with wisdom and with the greatest care.

In the process of plowing, sowing and harvesting everything is focused on the fruit. With the fruit, the chaff must be separated from the corn. The chaff of iniquity must be separated from the wheat of the person with whom is dealt. This is not a process that goes on and on. It applies to God's



actions and also to the activities of the farmer. The LORD of hosts, Who as Creator has given the farmer the necessary discernment for his work, knows how to act with perfect wisdom when He deals with His people. He will not destroy them. They remain His own property.

When the land has been plowed and levelled and when the seed has been sown, there is finally the harvest with the fruits of the land. Then the LORD will say to His people: "From Me comes your fruit" (Hos 14:8d).

We may know that the Lord is also so busy with us. He chastises us "for [our] good, so that we may share His holiness" and that His chastisements "to those who have been trained by it, afterward" will give "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:10-11). He knows exactly what His own are able to endure (1Cor 10:13). He knows how to deal with each seed, with each of His own. Anyone who wishes to be used by the Lord must keep this principle in mind. Then he, who desires to help others, will deal with everyone he desires to help in a thoughtful and wise way.

What a comfort to know that the way of God is perfect (Psa 18:30). It is true: He "has made [His] counsel wonderful and [His] wisdom great" (verse 29b). Praised be His Name!

## Isaiah 29

### Introduction

While the king of the North is in Egypt, restoration will take place in Israel with the return of the remnant from the two tribes – and later from the ten tribes (Mt 24:31). Through the intervention of the LORD, the enemy moving against Israel at that time will be destroyed and Israel will be redeemed.

Historically, a preliminary fulfillment and also illustration of this takes place through the miraculous destruction of the army of Assyria and later through the death of Sanherib, the king of Assyria (Isa 37:36-38).

### Isa 29:1-4 | The Siege of Jerusalem

*1 Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city [where] David [once] camped!*

*Add year to year, observe [your] feasts on schedule.*

*2 I will bring distress to Ariel,*

*And she will be [a city of] lamenting and mourning;*

*And she will be like an Ariel to me.*

*3 I will camp against you encircling [you],*

*And I will set siegeworks against you,*

*And I will raise up battle towers against you.*

*4 Then you will be brought low;*

*From the earth you will speak,*

*And from the dust [where] you are prostrate*

*Your words [will come].*

*Your voice will also be like that of a spirit from the ground,*

*And your speech will whisper from the dust.*

In the beginning of Isaiah 28 Samaria is compared with a fading crown of flowers. This chapter begins with the announcement of a “woe” to “Ariel”, which is Jerusalem (verse 1). Ariel means “lion of God”. Ariel is also translated as ‘[fire] hearth of God’ with the connotation ‘altar of God’. In that

case it also means Jerusalem, but then seen as a place of sacrifice where the fire burns in the new temple (Eze 43:15-16).

‘Lion of God’ points to the great power of the Lord Jesus as King (Mt 28:18) which He will use to rule from Jerusalem. He is then the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev 5:5). The ‘altar of God’ (Isa 31:9; Eze 43:15-16) points to Jerusalem as the future center of service to God. The nations will come to worship the LORD there in the new temple.

The LORD denotes Jerusalem as “the city [where] David [once] camped”. This indicates His intimate connection with it and also points to the future when the great Son of David will dwell and reign there. Then the LORD will be *for* that city, but now He must turn *against* that city to purify it. The reason is their religiosity, which is still a purely formal matter, in which nothing is for Him.

He says in a mocking tone that they should continue with their formal religious obligations by observing their annual feasts. The expression ‘year to year’ makes it clear that these feasts have become a habit, yes, a rut, no more than a formal handling. To place their trust in this is foolish (cf. Jer 7:4).

He Himself will bring distress to them (verse 2). Ariel is not yet a lion here, but a hearth of massacre. Jerusalem undergoes a deeply humiliating treatment here, under the fire of God’s anger. The LORD shall besiege the city, a siege which He shall cause to take place by the enemy armies in the end time (verse 3). This is about the second siege of the Assyrians of Jerusalem in the end time.

When the king of the North is in Egypt he will hear rumors from the east and from the north and therefore return from Egypt to Jerusalem (Dan 11:44). The festive bustle and party cheer in the city of Jerusalem (cf. Isa 22:2) will turn in agony and deep mumbling over the disasters that are now imminent (verse 4).

### Isa 29:5-8 | The LORD Delivers Jerusalem

*5 But the multitude of your enemies will become like fine dust,  
And the multitude of the ruthless ones like the chaff which blows away;  
And it will happen instantly, suddenly.*

*6 From the LORD of hosts you will be punished with  
thunder and earthquake and loud noise,  
[With] whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire.  
7 And the multitude of all the nations who wage war against Ariel,  
Even all who wage war against her and her stronghold, and who distress her,  
Will be like a dream, a vision of the night.  
8 It will be as when a hungry man dreams —  
And behold, he is eating;  
But when he awakens, his hunger is not satisfied,  
Or as when a thirsty man dreams —  
And behold, he is drinking,  
But when he awakens, behold, he is faint  
And his thirst is not quenched.  
Thus the multitude of all the nations will be  
Who wage war against Mount Zion.*

Then there is a sudden reversal. The enemies are unexpectedly so crushingly defeated that they become like fine dust that can be blown away (verse 5; Dan 11:45). Isaiah addresses the inhabitants of Jerusalem and wants to share with them what he sees his spiritual eyes. With a sudden intervention the LORD intervenes. He intervenes by thunder and lightning (verse 6) in order to free Jerusalem from distress. The multitude of all the nations who wage war disappear as in a dream the appeared figures disappear (verse 7).

For the enemies it is also like a dream, but a terrible nightmare. They dream of victory, that they have Jerusalem in their hands, but they wake up and see that they have achieved nothing (verse 8). That will happen when the Lord Jesus is back in Zion. A fulfillment of this prophecy will take place in the short term when Jerusalem is enclosed by the Assyrians (Isa 37:33) and the Assyrian army is beaten by the LORD (Isa 37:36).

### **Isa 29:9-16 | The Judgment of Blinding**

*9 Be delayed and wait,  
Blind yourselves and be blind;  
They become drunk, but not with wine,  
They stagger, but not with strong drink.*

*10 For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep,  
He has shut your eyes, the prophets;  
And He has covered your heads, the seers.*

*11 The entire vision will be to you like the words of a sealed book,  
which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, "Please  
read this," he will say, "I cannot, for it is sealed." 12 Then the  
book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, "Please read  
this." And he will say, "I cannot read." 13 Then the Lord said,  
"Because this people draw near with their words*

*And honor Me with their lip service,  
But they remove their hearts far from Me,  
And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned [by rote],  
14 Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelous-  
ly with this people, wondrously marvelous;  
And the wisdom of their wise men will perish,  
And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed."*

*15 Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD,  
And whose deeds are [done] in a dark place,  
And they say, "Who sees us?" or "Who knows us?"*

*16 You turn [things] around!  
Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay,  
That what is made would say to its maker, "He did not make me";  
Or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?*

In verse 9 Isaiah again describes the condition of God's people, the sad moral condition that makes God's intervention by the Assyrians necessary two times. In the previous chapter he denounced the mocking spirit and unbelief (Isa 28:14), here he points to the spirit of blindness. He tells them to continue in blindness on their foolish, self-chosen path. In spite of all the revelations of God's will, and in spite of the constant messages of His prophets, they have turned away and followed the counsels and imaginations of their own hearts.

As if drunk by wine, they are intoxicated by human traditions that invalidate the Word of God. Thus the Word has become unintelligible to them. This is not because the Word of God lacks clear statements or because teaching is too complicated, but because they have become blind because

of their unbelief (cf. Mt 13:14-15). It is the path of hardening. In their spiritual intoxication they stagger toward judgment.

The blindness and numbness are also a judgment of the LORD (verse 10). After the people have chosen to be blind and have hardened their hearts, the moment comes when the LORD respects their choice as it were and says to them: 'If you choose to be blind, you will be blind. If you choose to harden your heart, I will harden your heart.'

This verse is quoted by Paul to show that the hardening of the people still exists in the present day (Rom 11:7-8; 2Cor 3:14). They do not *want* to understand, therefore they *shall* not understand. Their spiritual state is like a deep sleep, through which voices do not penetrate them. Their prophets, those who are the eyes of the people to see what the LORD wants from His people, have closed their eyes. Their heads, the seers, cannot see anything either. Those who are to lead the blind people are blind themselves. And how can a blind man lead a blind man (Mt 15:14-15)?

The revealed will of God has become for them like a sealed book. The one who can read does not understand its message (verse 11). The other cannot read and does not understand its message either (verse 12).

Many Christians are in such a state when it comes, for example, to the prophetic book of the New Testament par excellence, the book of Revelation. It is considered a sealed book that one cannot read, or the reader sees himself as incapable of reading it, despite the name of the book, 'Revelation' or 'unveiling'. People who believe they have found an excuse not to read in God's Word show that the blindness does its work.

The lip religion, in which the heart is estranged from God (verse 13), is the result of traditions, learned commandments of men. The heart is the birthplace of thoughts (Mt 15:19). It "is more deceitful than all else" and only "I, the LORD, search the heart" to its deepest hiding places (Jer 17:9-10). The Lord Jesus quotes these words of Isaiah when He reproaches the religious leaders for making the Word of God powerless by teaching doctrines that are commandments of men (Mt 15:3-9; Mk 7:6-9).

The result is the loss of wisdom and the concealment of the will of God (verse 14). This is the result of a marvelous act of God, marvelous because

it is a judgment on His own people. He is against His people. Therefore the LORD continues to act in the same way as in the past two thousand years.

The word of verse 14 is also a word quoted by Paul in connection with the preaching of the word of the cross (1Cor 1:18-19). It shows that in its application it also has authority for professing Christianity today. This judgment of hardening announced by Isaiah also applies to professing Christianity, although fortunately not yet in full. However, it will happen fully after the rapture of the church (2Thes 2:11-12). In professing Christianity one also has the Bible in one's hands, while one is not able to read or understand what God has to say, because the heart is alienated from God. He will exhibit the so-called wisdom of liberal theologians as foolishness.

How deep the apostate can sink, is shown in verse 15. It is the greatest foolishness to suppose that one can hide from the LORD as long as one does so deep enough. This is where the third "woe" comes in. The prophet is deeply shocked by it. He expresses his great indignation at their folly to suppose that they are wiser than the LORD (verse 16). The LORD says to them: "You turn [things] around." Everything is turned upside down. Instead of putting their trust in the LORD in heaven, they put their trust in people on earth. It is foolishness at the top.

In their minds they have turned the relationship between the puny little creature and the sovereign Creator upside down (cf. Isa 45:9; 64:8; Jer 18:1-6; Rom 9:19-21; Job 33:13). They deny their relationship with Him or attribute inferior qualities to Him. They deny what the psalmist joyfully acknowledges, namely, that the LORD knows him through and through (Psa 139:1-4).

They are like the clay that claims to be on the same level as the potter and in its folly claims that the potter did not make a pot of him (Rom 9:21). We also recognize it in the folly of the big bang and evolutionary theory which are invented to deny God as Creator.

This is the error of all who want to act independent from God. They do not take into account that they were not created to live for themselves, but to serve Him. They deny that He created them or blame Him for having dealt without understanding. It's the kind of people that blames God for all the misery, as if He worked it through His actions. Such foolishness shows

that they are blind to the fact that they have brought all the misery upon themselves through their unbelief and obstinacy. The only way to blessing for man is to bow down to the absolutely wise Creator and submit to His holy will.

**Isa 29:17-24 | Joy for the Afflicted and Needy**

*17 Is it not yet just a little while  
Before Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field,  
And the fertile field will be considered as a forest?  
18 On that day the deaf will hear words of a book,  
And out of [their] gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.  
19 The afflicted also will increase their gladness in the LORD,  
And the needy of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.  
20 For the ruthless will come to an end and the scorner will be finished,  
Indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off;  
21 Who cause a person to be indicted by a word,  
And ensnare him who adjudicates at the gate,  
And defraud the one in the right with meaningless arguments.  
22 Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob:  
"Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now turn pale;  
23 But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst,  
They will sanctify My name;  
Indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob  
And will stand in awe of the God of Israel.  
24 "Those who err in mind will know the truth,  
And those who criticize will accept instruction.*

The LORD will exhibit their folly. At His coming, He will reverse the reverse and set things right again (verse 17). He does so through the remnant. He will make the forests of the Lebanon fertile and make the fertile field a forest. In other words: He will work a total reversal of things.

He will do so after "just a little while" of the great tribulation (cf. Isa 10:25). That is what "on that day" (verse 18) connects to. That is the period that the Lord Jesus will reign publicly over the earth, a period that is still to come. Then He will make sure that the (spiritually) deaf will be able to



hear the Scriptures and that the (spiritually) blind will be able to see (Isa 35:5-6). That is the time when no one has to say to the other 'know the LORD', for they will all know Him, from the least of them to the greatest of them (Jer 31:34). Deafness and blindness are the two characteristics of the spiritual state of the people of Israel (cf. Isa 6:9; 42:19; Mt 12:22; 11:5).

What He does to a remnant is in contrast to the judgment of hardening and blinding that He brings on the mass (verses 11-12). This remnant consists of "the afflicted" and "the needy" (verse 19). They have become that because they have learned it from the LORD Himself, Who is the Lord Jesus (Mt 11:28-29). They will rejoice in "the LORD" and in "the Holy One of Israel".

So it is now. The afflicted and the needy, or the meek and the poor, are they among the believers who are aware of their spiritual need. They have the greatest joy in the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit ministers the glory of Christ especially to them (Isa 61:1; Zep 3:12; Mt 5:3,5).

At that time, "the ruthless", that is the Assyrians, and "the scorner", that is the man of sin, the antichrist, will be eliminated (verse 20). Their taunting, God degrading language will no longer be heard. "All who are intent on doing evil", all those who follow them and are therefore animated by the same evil, that is, the wicked mass, will be exterminated. The corruptness of their mind is manifested in their rejection and distortion of all that is just and right (verse 21). "The gate" is the place of justice and government (Deu 21:19-21; Rth 4:1).

The basis of blessing for the remnant, "the house of Jacob," is the covenant of the LORD with Abraham, whom He redeemed from his heathen environment (verse 22; Isa 51:2). Once the house of Jacob – that is, all twelve tribes – has been freed from shame and violence, it will rejoice in all the redeemed children who have been spared by the work of the LORD's hands (verse 23).

Jacob and his children will sanctify "My Name", which is the Name of the LORD, that is make His Name great above all names. The Name of the LORD will be sanctified when Israel returns to his land and is restored (cf. Mt 6:9; Eze 36:20-24). In the same way, they will also sanctify "the Holy One of Jacob", exalt that Name above all names as incomparable. They will

also stand in awe of “the God of Israel”. These three Names relate to one Person: the Lord Jesus.

Besides physical ailments such as deafness and blindness (verse 18), the remnant will also be cured of illnesses of their mind (verse 24). Instead of an erring mind they will have the right insight and instead of being animated by a grumbling mind that complains about the in their eyes difficult or foolish teachings of God’s Word, they will gladly accept instruction from God’s Word. At last the moment has come for them to return to the LORD and the veil or covering that is still there at the time of reading the Old Testament will be removed (2Cor 3:14-16). This will find its glorious fulfillment in the realm of peace.

## Isaiah 30

### Introduction

This chapter gives a retrospective of the period of God's indignation by the Assyrians. There are two reasons for this discipline of God:

1. Israel's trust in the power of Egypt by making a covenant with it (verses 1-7; cf. Isa 28:15).
2. Their rejection of God (verses 8-12), a picture of the rejection of Christ.

About their trust in the power of Egypt we read in verse 2 of this chapter: "... without consulting Me". If they had, they would have known that it is forbidden to return to Egypt (Exo 13:17; Deu 17:16). In addition to the sin of rebellion because of which God must discipline them through the Assyrians, they sin by returning to Egypt to make a covenant. By this they show that they do not trust the LORD (Isa 7:9). We also see here the flight of the wicked Jews to Egypt during the Assyrian invasion. That will not help, because the Assyrians will push on to Egypt and still get them there.

### Isa 30:1-5 | Against the Covenant with Egypt

*1 "Woe to the rebellious children," declares the LORD,  
"Who execute a plan, but not Mine,  
And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit,  
In order to add sin to sin;  
2 Who proceed down to Egypt  
Without consulting Me,  
To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh  
And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!  
3 "Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame  
And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation.  
4 "For their princes are at Zoan  
And their ambassadors arrive at Hanes.  
5 "Everyone will be ashamed because of a people who cannot profit them,  
[Who are] not for help or profit, but for shame and also for reproach."*

A “woe”, the fourth, is now pronounced against Judah because of a plan to seek help from Egypt to protect themselves against Assyria (verse 1; 2Kgs 18:21). It is the plan of “rebellious children,” of those who claim to be God’s people but have no faith in Him. It is a self-conceived plan, it is not inspired by God’s Spirit. We see here that Isaiah represents the LORD and the Spirit as unity. What the LORD does, the Spirit does.

With the execution of their plan they make the pile of sins that is already there even higher. As they set out for Egypt to carry out their plan, they show their perseverance in their rebellion against the LORD (verse 2). They prefer the protection of Pharaoh and Egypt, the small and deceptive “shadow,” over reliance on the protection of Him, “the shadow of the Almighty” (Psa 91:1).

This reliance on Egypt will become shame and humiliation (verse 3). Their diplomats sent to Egypt to negotiate in the cities of Zoan and Hanes will not gain any advantage, but scorn (verses 4-5). Possibly we can also think of the trust the apostate Jews will place in their covenant with Europe in the near future, which is the restored Roman Empire.

That Israel does not trust God sounds like a refrain in this book. They trust Assyria (Isaiah 7), Egypt (Isaiah 30) and Babylon, a type of Europe (Isaiah 40-48). Egypt will also be a refuge for the unbelieving Jews, but in vain, because Egypt as the king of the South will also suffer from the invasion of the Assyrians, the king of the North (Dan 11:40-43).

All the plans that we too make without consulting the Lord may well have the same character as the plans of Israel. What is our trust based on?

### **Isa 30:6-7 | Burden of the Beasts of the Negev**

*6 The oracle concerning the beasts of the Negev.  
Through a land of distress and anguish,  
From where [come] lioness and lion, viper and flying serpent,  
They carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys  
And their treasures on camels' humps,  
To a people who cannot profit [them];  
7 Even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty.  
Therefore, I have called her*

| *“Rahab who has been exterminated.”*

“The burden of the beasts of the Negev” concerns the beasts that live in the Negev wilderness (verse 6). Through this wild landscape they have to travel with their pack animals on their journey to Egypt. They have to do so because the ordinary paths are in the hands of the Assyrians. The desperate Judah is willing to undertake a dangerous journey and invest great treasures in search of help that will turn out to be vain. As dangerous and unreliable as the beasts are they may encounter along the way, “lioness and lion, viper and flying serpent”, as dangerous and unreliable the leaders of Egypt will prove to be.

The treasures which they carry on donkeys and camels in order to secure the help of a land from which the LORD delivered them long ago, will not bring them the desired help. It will all turn out to be in vain with only loss (verse 7). The language here is faltering, literally it says: ‘Egypt? Vain and empty, they help ...’.

“Rahab” is a poetic name for Egypt (Isa 51:9; Psa 87:4; 89:10). Originally it is a kind of monster (Isa 27:1) – probably Behemoth is meant (Job 40:15-24) –, a figurative name for satan, a demonic power. The name Rahab means ‘arrogant’ and typifies the essence of satan. In spite of his pride, Egypt will remain silent in powerlessness and will not be able to extend a hand to help Judah. It is what we call ‘a paper tiger’. Literally you can translate: ‘Rahab (the terrible monster)? She does nothing...’

### Isa 30:8-11 | Rejection of the Word

*8 Now go, write it on a tablet before them  
And inscribe it on a scroll,  
That it may serve in the time to come  
As a witness forever.  
9 For this is a rebellious people, false sons,  
Sons who refuse to listen  
To the instruction of the LORD;  
10 Who say to the seers, “You must not see [visions]”;  
And to the prophets, “You must not prophesy to us what is right,  
Speak to us pleasant words,*

*Prophesy illusions.*

*11 "Get out of the way, turn aside from the path,*

*Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."*

After the prophet condemned their reliance on Egypt, he now speaks about the cause. It is in their mind. For they have not put their trust in the LORD. This is now being uncovered by the LORD.

Prophecy has two forms: the spoken form and the written form. Spoken prophecy is meant for those who are present at that moment and can hear it. Written prophecy reaches many more people, not only at that moment, but also in future generations.

Isaiah is commanded to write down his words "before them" i.e. in their presence (verse 8). It is in the first place an important warning for them. He has to write down his message "on a tablet" and inscribe it "on a scroll". A 'tablet' means a clay tablet or stone tablet and a 'scroll' means papyrus rolls. Writing down his message emphasizes that this warning not to go to Egypt for help is not only meant for God's people in the days of Isaiah. It is also meant for God's people in all times and especially the people of Israel in the near future.

God's Word is for all times. In the future, Israel should not place its trust in the military power of the restored Roman Empire, but in the LORD (Psa 121:1-2). We have no other yardstick. Trust in God is based on the written Word of God (Lk 6:47-49).

Seeking help from Egypt – for us: from the world – can only end in disaster. Recording the warning is necessary because the people are "a rebellious people" (verse 9). The peoples of the world also record their victories and outstanding qualities. But those peoples do not usually write negative things about themselves. The Word of God also records the negative attributes of the people of God, for the Word of God is the truth.

The people are made up of "false sons", who do not want to listen to the teaching of the LORD. 'False' here does not mean in the first place that they 'lie', but that they 'disappoint'. Their reluctant resistance to hear comes back again and again. It is the root cause of their apostasy. The prophet should not come to them with the truth (verse 10; Amos 2:12b). They do not like it. The truth brings them into the light of the Holy One of Israel.

They do not want that. If they are willing to hear something, then it must be a message adapted to their wishes (2Tim 4:3-4; Mic 2:11).

They want prophets like Isaiah and his contemporary Micah to change direction. "The Holy One of Israel" must not be brought before them and therefore He must disappear from their sight (verse 11). They use that Name because Isaiah often uses it in his preaching to them. They say, as it were: 'Now stop your whining about that Holy One of Israel.' They do not want to be reminded of that Name or to be confronted with it. This is a dramatic rejection of the LORD.

Freely translated, they say to the prophet and to LORD: 'Out of the way! Step aside!' Thus will be the spiritual state of the great mass in Israel during the great tribulation. Their guilt is great. They will accept the anti-christ after they have rejected Christ (Jn 5:43). For this they are warned by God's Word in the next section.

### **Isa 30:12-17 | If the Word Is Rejected**

*12 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel,  
 "Since you have rejected this word  
 And have put your trust in oppression and guile, and have relied on them,  
 13 Therefore this iniquity will be to you  
 Like a breach about to fall,  
 A bulge in a high wall,  
 Whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant,  
 14 Whose collapse is like the smashing of a potter's jar,  
 So ruthlessly shattered  
 That a sherd will not be found among its pieces  
 To take fire from a hearth  
 Or to scoop water from a cistern."  
 15 For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said,  
 "In repentance and rest you will be saved,  
 In quietness and trust is your strength."  
 But you were not willing,  
 16 And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses,"  
 Therefore you shall flee!  
 "And we will ride on swift [horses],"*

*Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.  
17 One thousand [will flee] at the threat of one [man];  
You will flee at the threat of five,  
Until you are left as a flag on a mountain top  
And as a signal on a hill.*

Then they hear from the mouth of “the Holy One of Israel”, Whom they wanted to keep far away from them, the judgment on all their rebellion, on their wicked will to live without Him (verse 12). They reject “this word”, that is, the instruction of the LORD. At the same time they rely on “oppression and guile”, i.e. the way in which they try to secure the friendship of Egypt. With this way of acting, they work their own downfall. This is how it was before that time, when they put their trust in Assyria, and this is how it will be in the future, when they will put their trust in the restored Roman Empire, Europe (Isa 28:15).

They believe they have the protection of a wall, but the wall is about to fall and they will be buried under its fall (verse 13). The collapse will not only come “suddenly in an instant”, but will be also total. Israel will so ruthlessly be shattered like pottery that not even a sherd will remain for its most mundane use (verse 14). The terrorist attack on the ‘Twin Towers’ in New York Sept. 11, 2001, and its consequences may be a good illustration of these verses.

This is due to their refusal to obtain salvation through “repentance and rest” (verse 15). “Repentance and rest” mean that they return from their own chosen path and turn to God (= repentance) and stop trusting in, or resting on, their own strength. Then their strength is in “quietness and trust” and they do not walk the way in their own strength. This gives the LORD the opportunity to show His strength, for God’s power is perfected in – our – weakness (2Cor 12:9). “Trust” means that they no longer put their trust in Egypt, but go to the LORD and trust in Him.

Isaiah reproaches them: “But you have not willed” (cf. Mt 23:37). They have shown their unwillingness. Then all effort is in vain and the LORD must confront them with the consequences of their evil will and judge them. His judgment is that they get their way. Their plan will turn against



them. Do they think they can flee quickly? They will, but their enemies will be faster (verse 16; 2Kgs 25:4-5).

Horses are ‘modern’ in those days, they are the means to victory. Nowadays we would say: ‘They rely on their ‘Iron Dome’ and nuclear weapons, instead of on the LORD.’ But then the LORD speaks: ‘Will they put an end to the Holy One of Israel (verse 11)? The Holy One of Israel will put an end to them (verse 14)’!

They will be bitterly disappointed. The fear will be so deep that seeing a single hostile soldier makes a thousand of them flee (verse 17; cf. Deu 32:30; Jos 23:10). And if the enemies come in five, the whole people will run away. If they had been obedient, the reverse would have been the case (Lev 26:8). Now in the depopulated land there will be only a few left here and there. It is the paragon of desolation. It is also a warning for us not to rely on people.

### Isa 30:18-22 | Grace for God’s People

*18 Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you,  
And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you.  
For the LORD is a God of justice;  
How blessed are all those who long for Him.*

*19 O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. 20 Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, [He], your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. 21 Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left. 22 And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing, [and] say to them, “Be gone!”*

It is precisely the desolation of verse 17 that brings the LORD to express the desire to be gracious to them, while being gracious is still being postponed (verse 18). The Hebrew word *haka* means waiting with desire, a waiting until the judgment is fully executed. Therefore the LORD does not intervene during the siege by the Assyrians, the king of the North. He

always shows His grace to a helpless remnant who has no right to it in himself and is aware of that.

The link between the chastisements presented above as necessary because of their rejection of Him and His Word and the announced compassion is that “the LORD is a God of justice”. Judgment is exercised; His righteousness is fulfilled. Then comes the second ‘therefore’. “Therefore” He can then have compassion.

We can summarize it as follows. Since they refuse to wait for the LORD, the LORD must wait for them, until through the judgments on their foolishness they return to Him like the prodigal son. To their cry for help: ‘How long *Yahweh*?’ His answer is: ‘As soon as you are ready and converted.’

Because God’s holy demands were met when He brought the full judgment on sin down upon Christ, He can show grace to anyone who appeals to that grace with repentance for his sins. The people still have to wait for that grace to be shown. They may already know that this grace is present. The time to accept them as His people in grace has not yet come. However, when they confidently “long for Him”, He calls them “blessed”.

The prophet gives more substance to this “blessedness” by promising them God’s comfort and hearing for the time of the great tribulation (verse 19). Babylon will never be rebuilt and Nineveh will be destroyed and will no longer be a city (Isa 13:19-21; Nah 1:14), but the Jews will have an everlasting dwelling place in Zion, in Jerusalem. Dwelling in Zion indicates God’s grace.

If the people ask Him for help and not any other people, He will answer by giving them this dwelling place of rest. The destiny of Israel, like ours, will be a home of rest. In Jerusalem they will find that peace after all their wanderings through countless foreign lands. There they will receive the proofs of Divine love that are waiting for them.

For a brief period of time they will undergo tribulation, namely at the time of the great tribulation. Then they will feed on the bread of privation and drink the water of oppression (verse 20). But after that time will come a blessed time, the realm of peace, in which He will provide them with guidance and education by skilled teachers He will give. Their teacher par excellence will be the Lord Jesus, Who is also called the “teacher for righ-

teousness” as the footnote to Joel 2:23 to “the early rain” reads (cf. Job 36:22; Jn 3:2; Psa 32:8).

The Hebrew word translated here with “Teacher” can be translated in singular or plural, but the verb “hide” is singular. The latter reinforces the idea that here we may think of God – in Hebrew, God is plural – as the Teacher.

He will be behind them and make them go the right way, keeping them from deviations (verse 21). This Teacher is constantly with them. “A word behind you” indicates that He is close by and that small instructions are sufficient to guide them in the right direction. “To the right or to the left” is an expression that indicates the choices to be made in life.

It is the same for us. The Lord Jesus is always with us and constantly wants to show us the right way through His Word. Listening to the teaching of God’s Word keeps us on the right way. If we want to deviate to the right or to the left, we hear His voice that keeps us on His way.

All these provisions of the LORD, together with the spirit of repentance that is in them, will have a cleansing effect on them (verse 22). Sound teaching from God’s Word and the Spirit of grace in God’s people are the basis for sound spiritual growth. It reveals in life what is contrary to this. Everything that is contrary to God’s Word will be thrown away like an impure thing. If God’s Word has its authority over our lives and we listen to it, we will also with a resolute “be gone!” remove everything from our lives that prevents us from receiving God’s blessing to the fullest.

### **Isa 30:23-26 | The Full Blessing of the LORD**

*23 Then He will give [you] rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread [from] the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture. 24 Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. 25 On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. 26 The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times [brighter], like the light of seven*

*days, on the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.*

In these verses Isaiah presents this blessing to the people. These are earthly blessings that belong to a people who have promises that all relate to life on earth. Their entire national existence takes place on earth. This blessing comes when the Lord Jesus will reign on earth as the Prince of peace. After the “bread of privation and water of oppression” that was present in scarcity (verse 20), there will be water in abundance through the rain of heaven that will also provide a yield of the ground that will be “rich and plenteous” (verse 23). The cattle will also be richly blessed and provided with the best nourishment, a compound and fermented animal food that is a treat for the livestock. Everything will then be abundant and of the best quality (verse 24).

Also on the higher places like mountains and hills water is abundant present (verse 25). In the last battles that will also be at the beginning of the realm of peace, no precautions are needed to secure the water supply as in the days of Hezekiah. In “the great slaughter, when the towers fall”, we can think of the destruction of the armies coming from the far north, that is from Russia, to God’s land (Eze 38:14-23).

Also the celestial bodies will emit a multiple of their light now still tempered by sin (verse 26). Literally, it says: ‘The light of the ‘white’ will be like the light of the ‘hot’, and the light of the ‘hot’ will be sevenfold, like the light of seven days.’ It is a (figurative) sun that will be a joy for people, not tempered by sorrow and grief. This will be the result of the restorative work of the LORD, when He has delivered His people from sorrow and suffering. The sun is above all the Lord Jesus Himself, “the sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). Although the enemies have not all been destroyed yet, the prospect given here is a great encouragement for the believing remnant.

### **Isa 30:27-32 | Judgment and Festival**

*27 Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place;  
Burning is His anger and dense is [His] smoke;  
His lips are filled with indignation*

*And His tongue is like a consuming fire;*  
 28 *His breath is like an overflowing torrent,*  
*Which reaches to the neck,*  
*To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve,*  
*And to [put] in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin.*  
 29 *You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival,*  
*And gladness of heart as when one marches to [the sound of] the flute,*  
*To go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel.*  
 30 *And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard,*  
*And the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger,*  
*And [in] the flame of a consuming fire*  
*In cloudburst, downpour and hailstones.*  
 31 *For at the voice of the LORD Assyria will be terrified,*  
*[When] He strikes with the rod.*  
 32 *And every blow of the rod of punishment,*  
*Which the LORD will lay on him,*  
*Will be with [the music of] tambourines and lyres;*  
*And in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight them.*

After the promises of the redemption of Judah we find in verses 27-33 a prediction of the judgment of God on the alliance of enemies. Not Egypt, but God Himself will destroy Assyria. While as in so many other places Assyria is the direct enemy, the prophet points forward to Assyria in the future. It is remarkable that often, after the judgment on Assyria has been discussed, the blessing of the realm of peace follows.

The LORD, that is, His Name – that is all He is in His connection with Israel – comes to judge (verse 27). The fact that His Name comes “from a remote place” means that He is far away from the nations who want to wipe out His people from the face of the earth. This concerns both Assyria in the days of Isaiah, and Assyria, the king of the North, in the future.

His coming to judge is connected with fire. We read that “His anger” is burning and “His tongue is like a consuming fire” (cf. Mal 3:2-3). Fire frightens and consumes (cf. 2Thes 1:7-8). God is also to us “a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29). In verse 28, Isaiah changes the picture of judgment by fire into the picture of judgment by water, and replaces “His tongue” with “His breath”. The LORD will judge the gathered nations with “His breath”

(cf. 2Thes 2:8), which will be like “an overflowing torrent” (cf. Isa 8:7-8). An overflowing torrent is a dry wadi, a dry river bed in the wilderness. Normally it is dry, but in the event of a downpour in the mountains it can become an all-destroying, flooding brook in a matter of minutes. Likewise, God’s judgment will be sudden and devastating.

When the LORD comes in the night to judge the enemies of His people, the remnant of God’s people will sing songs (verse 29). It is reminiscent of the night of the exodus from Egypt when the judgment comes on the oppressors of God’s people (Exo 12:42) and the song of salvation they sing after their deliverance (Exo 15:1). They sing songs in view of the coming day. It is a song that sings the ascent to Jerusalem even before the advance there has begun.

If “the Rock of Israel”, which is the LORD in His unshakeable stability, stands before their attention, this song can be sung in faith. We see a similar thing with Jehoshaphat, who during his war placed the choir at the front (2Chr 20:21). We also see it in Paul and Silas singing songs of praise before the earthquake and deliverance happen (Acts 16:25-26).

In verse 30 Isaiah continues his description of the coming of the LORD. In an impressive way he describes the majesty of His coming. It will frighten Assyria (verse 31; cf. 1Sam 7:10). Assyria, once used by God as a rod to discipline His people (Isa 10:5), while Assyria himself used a rod and staff for it (Isa 10:24), will now be struck by the LORD with the rod. Every blow with God’s rod will be a hit. The striking will happen as it were to the beat of the songs of deliverance that the remnant will sing accompanied by musical instruments (verse 32).

### **Isa 30:33 | The Burning Place**

*33 For Topheth has long been ready,  
Indeed, it has been prepared for the king.  
He has made it deep and large,  
A pyre of fire with plenty of wood;  
The breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.*

“Topheth” or “the burning place” (cf. Jer 19:6), is connected with God’s judgment on the Assyrians. The prophetic meaning reaches further. It is

the place in the valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem where cruel and horrible child sacrifices were brought to Molech (2Kgs 23:10; Jer 7:31-32). Topheth is not only the destiny of the Assyrians, but also the destiny of “the king” or the antichrist (cf. Dan 11:36).

In that place the breath of the LORD will ignite the fire of His anger to consume the antichrist and also the enemy armies (2Thes 2:8). The antichrist is the cause of the chastisement of the LORD through His rod, the Assyrians. Now that the LORD is finished with the chastisement, finally both the rod and the antichrist are brought to Topheth.

## Isaiah 31

### **Isa 31:1-3 | Woe to Those Seeking Help From Egypt**

*1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help  
[And] rely on horses,  
And trust in chariots because they are many  
And in horsemen because they are very strong,  
But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!  
2 Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster  
And does not retract His words,  
But will arise against the house of evildoers  
And against the help of the workers of iniquity.  
3 Now the Egyptians are men and not God,  
And their horses are flesh and not spirit;  
So the LORD will stretch out His hand,  
And he who helps will stumble  
And he who is helped will fall,  
And all of them will come to an end together.*

In this chapter the LORD teaches the remnant of Israel that is left after the Assyrian massacre (Zec 13:8-9). That third remaining part is now to be purified as gold or silver (Mal 3:3). To this end, they must confess and condemn their national sins – the rejection of Christ and the acceptance of the antichrist (Jn 5:43).

In Isaiah 7 Ahaz is threatened by Syria and Ephraim. However, Ahaz relies on Assyria and not on the LORD. Now that there is a threat from Assyria, Judah puts his trust in Egypt and not in the LORD. During the invasion of Assyria a part of the unbelieving people fled to Egypt. This is how it will happen in the future. At that time, the Jews will put their trust in the anti-christ and the military power of Europe, the restored Roman Empire, and not in the LORD. The faithful remnant will confess as the core of the new Israel of God that trusting man is vain, to no avail, useless.



The tendency to place his hope in the world is deeply rooted in the heart of man. That is why in this short chapter there is a repetition of the warning against it, preceded by a powerful “woe”. Again Isaiah pronounces the “woe” to those who seek help from Egypt because of their horses, chariots, and horsemen instead of from the LORD (verse 1; cf. Deu 17:16). Trust in horses always represents a false trust (Psa 20:7). God judges that way as a “going down”. The way away from God is always down.

These verses are therefore written as a lamentation about someone going down a descending path. God judges these persons as people “going down”. They do not only descend literally, but also morally. “Those who go down” is one noun in Hebrew. It indicates that it is not a one-time act of going down, but that it concerns people who are used to descending, whose trust is not in God, but in man.

This characterizes professing Christianity today. To many Christians, God is nothing more than a word. Those who rely on such an intangible ‘word’ are, in their eyes, people who close their eyes to reality. Of course, it is just the other way around. If a Christian today seeks to reconnect with the world instead of living in dependence on God, he is dishonoring the Name of the Lord, Who has redeemed him from the world and bought him for Himself.

They may think to act with wisdom – Egypt symbolizes the wisdom of the world – but, as it sounds with an undertone of sarcasm, the LORD is also wise (verse 2). His wisdom is expressed in the judgment on Egypt (Isa 30:14) and of those who consider the power of Egypt to be greater than His power. In verse 3 the prophet speaks of the Egyptians as “men” who are creatures in the presence of the fullness of the power of God, their Creator. He speaks of their horses as “flesh,” as opposed to “spirit,” by which spiritual powers are meant. With the spirit that man possesses – an animal has no spirit – he can connect with God.

“He who helps”, i.e. Egypt, and “he who is helped”, i.e. Judah, will both stumble, fall down and perish by the judgment of the LORD. In the end time, this will happen with the united Europe and the apostate Israel that expects help from Europe. The same goes for Egypt where the apostate Israel will seek refuge during the Assyrian invasion.

Often Christians also rely on aids offered to them by the world and the flesh. Examples are churches that are led according to principles that are used in business instead of consulting God's Word. We also see that those who are at their wit's end are comforted by psychotherapeutic means, without there being room for the Lord and His own. In the preaching of the gospel, human advertising methods are used to persuade unbelievers to become Christians instead of preaching God's Word with power through the Spirit.

### **Isa 31:4-7 | The Sure Protection**

*4 For thus says the LORD to me,  
"As the lion or the young lion growls over his prey,  
Against which a band of shepherds is called out,  
[And] he will not be terrified at their voice nor disturbed at their noise,  
So will the LORD of hosts come down to wage  
war on Mount Zion and on its hill."  
5 Like flying birds so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem.  
He will protect and deliver [it];  
He will pass over and rescue [it].  
6 Return to Him from whom you have deeply defected, O sons of Israel. 7 For  
in that day every man will cast away his silver idols and his gold idols, which  
your sinful hands have made for you as a sin.*

Isaiah lets the believing remnant know Who the LORD is to them. To them He is like a lion, "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5), who watches over his prey. A hungry lion does not let his prey be robbed by anyone and regardless of their number (verse 4; cf. Jn 10:28-30). Thus the LORD does not let Himself be robbed of Jerusalem, but descends from heaven to protect it.

This is one of the clearest texts in the Old Testament about the coming of the Lord Jesus to earth (cf. Zec 14:4). It is about His appearance to rescue Israel and thereby to fulfill the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We have to distinguish this apparition from His coming to take the believers home (1Thes 4:14-18).

The LORD is not impressed by the clattering of arms and screaming to heaven of the enemies of His people, who are also His enemies. He will come down from heaven and judge them (Psa 2:1-6). He watches over Jerusalem as a bird protects her young, while He delivers her with the speed of a bird (verse 5). Here the picture of a lion changes into that of a bird, but the message remains the same.

First the LORD is compared to a strong lion, brave, fearless, powerful. Thus He sets Himself up against the enemies of His people. Then He is compared to a caring bird that defends and protects its nest (cf. Rth 2:12; Deu 32:11-12; Mt 23:37). In this way He stands up for His beloved city.

The closing line of verse 5 is reminiscent of the Passover in Egypt. There the judgment of the LORD has passed by the houses where the blood has been done on the doorposts and He delivers the houses of His people from the power of Egypt (Exo 12:13,23,27).

When Isaiah presented the LORD in this way to them, the heart is made receptive to hear the call to repentance and to answer it (verse 6), for the LORD gives salvation only after their conversion. If they heed the call, then the idols will be cast away by them (verse 7). True repentance is proven by the removal from the life of every serving and honoring of anything or anyone other than God (1Thes 1:9). The day will come when Israel has nothing more to do with idols, but will live only for the true God. This should already be the case in the life of the Christian.

### Isa 31:8-9 | Assyria Falls by the LORD

*8 And the Assyrian will fall by a sword not of man,  
And a sword not of man will devour him.*

*So he will not escape the sword,*

*And his young men will become forced laborers.*

*9 "His rock will pass away because of panic,*

*And his princes will be terrified at the standard,"*

*Declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.*

The enemy that oppresses Jerusalem will fall by the sword. That sword is not wielded by a human being. Not the Egyptians will defeat Assyria. The LORD Himself will wield the sword to defeat Assyria (verse 8). In the

short term this will happen at the siege of Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah (Isa 37:36). In the end time it will happen again and finally by the Lord Jesus when He comes from heaven (Dan 11:45; Rev 19:11,15,21). What is left of the power of the nations, represented in the “young men”, will be placed in the service of the people of God.

“His rock” (verse 9) refers to the protection that Assyria has proclaimed to be for all who are subject to him. This “rock” will perish in terror at the sight of the majesty of the LORD. The ‘rock’ probably means the king of Assyria. Other leaders of his people will also lose the courage to lead his armies further in the fight against Jerusalem. They will discover that the LORD let go forth from Zion a consuming fire and made Jerusalem a consuming furnace for those who have been gone up against it. Then Jerusalem will be a true “Ariel” (Isa 29:1). They have ventured to destroy God’s holy city. They themselves will be destroyed by it.

## Isaiah 32

### **Isa 32:1-4 | The Realm of Peace**

*1 Behold, a king will reign righteously  
And princes will rule justly.  
2 Each will be like a refuge from the wind  
And a shelter from the storm,  
Like streams of water in a dry country,  
Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.  
3 Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded,  
And the ears of those who hear will listen.  
4 The mind of the hasty will discern the truth,  
And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.*

The beginning of this chapter describes the situation following the deliverance of the previous chapter, where Christ has come to save His people. Now follows the meeting with Christ personally and the prophecy of Christ's personal, millennial reign (verse 1; cf. 2Sam 23:3; Jer 23:5). The remaining people of Israel will take to heart the exhortations of the previous chapter and repent. Now Christ can make Himself known to His people, just as the viceroy of Egypt, Joseph, did to His brothers after they have repented. This will be very personal, without the presence of others (cf. Gen 45:1).

This can never refer to the current time. The Lord Jesus does not rule in righteousness now. How anyone can assume that seeing all the wars and all the misery on earth, is incomprehensible. The world is still full of injustice. When He reigns, there will also be "princes" who will "rule" under Him (Rev 5:10; Mt 19:28; 2Tim 2:12; Rev 20:6; 22:5).

The kings of this world, such as the antichrist and the king of the North, can be compared to beasts, dragons, predators, against whom the people must protect themselves. On the other hand, Christ, the King, is painted in this verse as the good Shepherd, the Sovereign Who dedicates His life to the good of the people. He is the Shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep,

the Son of Man Who came, not to be served, “but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28).

Christ – He is meant with “a man” (verse 2, Darby Translation) – will personally be the protection and refreshment for those who, at the beginning of the realm of peace, are still threatened by hostile powers from the far north (Ezekiel 38-39). It is possible that this protection and refreshment will also be given by the princes who rule with Him at that time (Mt 19:28).

From the rulers in verses 1-2 the prophet passes to the people (verse 3). Christ makes Himself known to His people in His Divine omnipotence when He heals the blind and deaf (Mt 11:2-6). At the same time we see His compassion in this. Nowhere in the Old Testament do we read that a blind man is healed. Healing a blind man is therefore seen by the Jews as the ultimate sign of the Messiah. In what the Lord Jesus says to the disciples of John the baptist about Himself being the Messiah, He mentions in His evidence as the first point that He heals the blind (Mt 11:5).

He does not only work physical healing. Being able to see and hear again has a spiritual counterpart. The inability to understand God’s thoughts is gone (verse 4; Isa 6:9-10). The judgment of hardening has been lifted. They have insight and knowledge. And now that their ears are opened, they can hear what God is saying and are also able to give a clear testimony of the greatness of the LORD without stammering.

Blindness and deafness are also the spiritual characteristics of the people of Israel (Isa 42:19; 6:9-10; Acts 28:27). A servant who is blind and deaf is not fit for any task. But Christ, the perfect Servant of the LORD, has come to heal the blind and deaf servant Israel.

### **Isa 32:5-8 | The Fool and the Noble**

*5 No longer will the fool be called noble,  
Or the rogue be spoken of [as] generous.  
6 For a fool speaks nonsense,  
And his heart inclines toward wickedness:  
To practice ungodliness and to speak error against the LORD,  
To keep the hungry person unsatisfied  
And to withhold drink from the thirsty.*

*7 As for a rogue, his weapons are evil;  
 He devises wicked schemes  
 To destroy [the] afflicted with slander,  
 Even though [the] needy one speaks what is right.  
 8 But the noble man devises noble plans;  
 And by noble plans he stands.*

In that time justice will reign and there will also have come an end to a reversal of values and to the utterly misjudgment of relationships in God's people. The people as a whole have called the foolish antichrist noble, and this "rogue" has been held in high regard by them because of his deceitful generosity (verse 5; Jn 5:43). Verses 6-7 give a more detailed description of what is being planned in the wicked heart of the fool and rogue. On the other hand, there is what the "noble man" devises, what his life radiates, and what is consistently present with him (verse 8).

In the realm of peace, everything will be called by its true name, as in creation, where Adam gives each being the appropriate name (Gen 2:19-20a). There will be no more reversal of things. No one can pretend to be anything other than what he really is. The "noble man" cannot be anyone but the Lord Jesus. But also every believer, everyone who has Him as his life and lives in fellowship with Him, may be such a "noble man". The believer is also asked to "devise noble plans" (Phil 4:8) – and not to "devise evil ... against one another" (Zec 7:10; 8:17) – and to stand by "noble plans".

### Isa 32:9-14 | Judgment About Complacency

*9 Rise up, you women who are at ease,  
 [And] hear my voice;  
 Give ear to my word,  
 You complacent daughters.  
 10 Within a year and [a few] days  
 You will be troubled, O complacent [daughters];  
 For the vintage is ended,  
 [And] the [fruit] gathering will not come.  
 11 Tremble, you [women] who are at ease;  
 Be troubled, you complacent [daughters];  
 Strip, undress and put [sackcloth] on [your] waist,*

*12 Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine,  
13 For the land of my people [in which] thorns [and] briars shall come up;  
Yea, for all the joyful houses [and for] the jubilant city.  
14 Because the palace has been abandoned, the populated city forsaken.  
Hill and watch-tower have become caves forever,  
A delight for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks;*

In verse 9 Isaiah is back in Jerusalem. Before righteousness reigns in the realm of peace, the people must first be purified during the great tribulation. In that time the people will send the prayer: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way” (Psa 139:23-24). To this end, the spiritual state of the people is described, a state that makes the purification by God necessary.

Isaiah turns with sharp words against the complacent women in the city (cf. Isa 3:16-26). He condemns their carelessness while judgment is at hand (cf. Amos 6:1a). They don’t care about anything except their own pleasure. They quietly live their lives of luxury and prosperity, without any fear of imminent danger. This carelessness and rest are not the result of trusting in the LORD, but of their indifference to the LORD and His words by the prophet.

Therefore, within not too long – and that time is indicated quite accurately – they will be awakened from that carelessness (verse 10). It will not come right away, but it will come for sure. Their rest will turn into trembling. It will be over with the fun in which wine plays such an important role.

Isaiah calls upon them to undress, to strip themselves of all their splendor (verse 11). He calls for repentance and sadness about the adopted lifestyle from which the LORD is excluded (cf. Lk 15:17-19). Isaiah presents to them what it will look like in not too long time (verses 12-14). It will all look desolate and hopeless.

There is no more milk for the babies; there is no more golden corn in the fields; there are no more vines with their sumptuous fruit (verse 12). The consequences of sin, the “thorns [and] briars”, will fill the land and overgrow the houses of joy and the exuberant city (verse 13). All is forsaken when their king is gone and the people are taken from their homes into



exile (verse 14; Zec 14:2b). The city has become a ghost town, without any protection. The only ones who still have some joy there are the wild donkeys who might find something edible there.

### **Isa 32:15-20 | Once More the Realm of Peace**

*15 Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high,  
And the wilderness becomes a fertile field,  
And the fertile field is considered as a forest.  
16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness  
And righteousness will abide in the fertile field.  
17 And the work of righteousness will be peace,  
And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.  
18 Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation,  
And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places;  
19 And it will hail when the forest comes down,  
And the city will be utterly laid low.  
20 How blessed will you be, you who sow beside all waters,  
Who let out freely the ox and the donkey.*

Then the hopeful “until” sounds again (verse 15). From this verse Isaiah looks again forward to the situation that will be there in the millennial realm of peace. Through the word “us” the prophet identifies himself with the redeemed people, that is the remnant. It begins with the outpouring of the Spirit (Eze 36:25-27; Joel 2:28; Zec 12:10; cf. Acts 2:1-4,16) on this believing remnant of Israel.

The Bible teaches not only a first and a second coming of the Lord Jesus, but also a first and a second coming of the Holy Spirit. Through the first coming of the Holy Spirit, the church came into being, God’s heavenly people, the body of Christ, in which the Spirit has dwelt since that event (Acts 2:1-4; 1Cor 12:13). The people coming into being by the second coming of the Holy Spirit are an earthly people who are the core of the people who will acknowledge the Lord Jesus as Messiah and receive His blessing.

With this second outpouring of the Holy Spirit will come an abundance of fertility (verse 15), righteousness (verse 16), and peace, quietness and confidence (verses 17-18). We must remember that this is not about the in-

dwelling of the Spirit, but about the working of the Spirit in this redeemed people.

What is a wilderness becomes a fertile field. What is a fertile field will become even more fertile. Justice will “dwell” [that is “to tabernacle”, “[dwelling] in tents”] in the realm of peace in the wilderness, which means that it will have its rest there (verse 16). Justice will be administered everywhere in a perfectly righteous manner.

As a result, there will be peace, for which the nations have labored in vain for so long (verse 17), for peace is based on righteousness. From this will flow again “quietness and confidence” which will have no end. This people that live in peace will still be attacked by Gog (Eze 38:11). This will have no effect on their quietness at all because the LORD will bring this enemy to the land to exterminate him there.

In verse 18 the Spirit searches, as it were, for words to describe how great the benefit is of living on earth then. There is no longer any fear of a hostile power, for the hail of God’s judgments will fall upon them, the forest (cf. Isa 10:18), and cause the city to sink into the depths (verse 19). The seed sown by the waters will produce abundant fruit (verse 20). The yield from the soil will be so great that the farmer will not have to feed his working animals with straw in their stalls, but can drive them to the abundance that has risen along the waters to take of it as much as they want.

There is also a spiritual application of the latter verse. Sowing besides all waters indicates the complete freedom to sow and teach God’s Word throughout the world. Whoever does so is called “blessed”. Sowing besides the waters indicates that it is also necessary to preach the gospel in the realm of peace, because every person who is born is born a sinner and must repent.

“The ox and the donkey” are symbolic of being busy in the service of the Lord, both in the preaching of the gospel and in the teaching of the church of God (cf. 1Cor 9:9-10; 1Tim 5:17-18).

## Isaiah 33

### **Isa 33:1-4 | The Enemy Is Paid Back**

*1 Woe to you, O destroyer,  
While you were not destroyed;  
And he who is treacherous, while [others] did  
not deal treacherously with him.  
As soon as you finish destroying, you will be destroyed;  
As soon as you cease to deal treacherously, [oth-  
ers] will deal treacherously with you.  
2 O LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited for You.  
Be their strength every morning,  
Our salvation also in the time of distress.  
3 At the sound of the tumult peoples flee;  
At the lifting up of Yourself nations disperse.  
4 Your spoil is gathered [as] the caterpillar gathers;  
As locusts rushing about men rush about on it.*

In Isaiah 28-32 a “woe” is pronounced five times to Israel and Judah (Isa 28:1; 29:1,15; 30:1; 31:1). The sixth “woe” is now pronounced to the “destroyer”, which is Assyria, and “he who is treacherous”, which is the antichrist (verse 1; verse 13). These are the two enemies the remnant faces in the end time, one enemy from the outside and the other enemy from the inside.

Again the prophecy from the time of Isaiah also looks forward to the future and eventual overthrow of the anti-Christian powers and to the day of Zion’s deliverance. The judgment on Assyria and the antichrist is based on the principle that a man reaps what he has sown (Gal 6:7-8). This is as true for nations as it is for individuals.

The final reckoning by the LORD with Assyria and the antichrist is preceded by a time when these enemies will bring God’s people in great distress. In view of their threat, the people will pray and beg for salvation (verse 2). Isaiah expresses in the first and last line of verse 2 the voice of the remnant

in the great tribulation, the “time of distress”. He identifies himself with them and feels their need as his own. That is why he speaks about “us” and “we” and “our” in these lines. They have not always waited for the LORD, but when they have converted, they wait for Him. Then they live out of grace.

In the middle line of verse 2 Isaiah begs the LORD to be “their strength [literally” “arm”] every morning”. There he is their intercessor and asks the LORD for what they need every day. He asks for His daily support for them, for in that time of great need they are dependent on His strength. Without His strength they are powerless. The prayer “give us this day our daily bread” (Mt 6:11), will then be actual. The praying attitude of Isaiah is a foreshadowing of the attitude of the believing remnant.

The LORD has promised to protect Israel (Isa 31:4-5). Therefore, the outcome is certain, not only in the days of Hezekiah, but also in the end time. The hostile nations, the heathen nations, that have gone up against Israel will be scattered by the LORD Who lifts up Himself (verse 3). The spoil these nations have conquered will be taken away by others (verse 4).

### **Isa 33:5-6 | The Treasure of Judah**

*5 The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high;  
He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.  
6 And He will be the stability of your times,  
A wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge;  
The fear of the LORD is his treasure.*

These verses are an interlude in which it is about the establishment of the millennial realm of peace. This is still future, because nowhere in the history of Israel has what is written here ever been fulfilled. The LORD will then be exalted and take His rightful place in the midst of His people. Zion will be filled “with justice and righteousness”. The LORD Himself will be the stability of the times of His people and will teach them through those times with “wisdom and knowledge” the contents of their salvation. This will be their true wealth. Wisdom and knowledge are features we also read of the Messiah, that is the Lord Jesus (Isa 11:2; 1Cor 1:30).

The treasure of Judah will be “the fear of the LORD” as opposed to the actions of Hezekiah (2Kgs 18:13-16). That treasure, “the fear of the LORD”, is the principle of wisdom and the principle of knowledge (Pro 1:7; 9:10). This fear of the LORD is found among believers for whom Christ is the greatest treasure, for in Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3).

### Isa 33:7-9 | If the Enemy Has Passed Through

*7 Behold, their brave men cry in the streets,  
The ambassadors of peace weep bitterly.  
8 The highways are desolate, the traveler has ceased,  
He has broken the covenant, he has despised the cities,  
He has no regard for man.  
9 The land mourns [and] pines away,  
Lebanon is shamed [and] withers;  
Sharon is like a desert plain,  
And Bashan and Carmel lose [their foliage].*

The prophet then describes the wretched state of Israel. The messengers who at the time went to Assyria on behalf of Hezekiah with a proposal for peace came out ashamed (verse 7; 2Kgs 18:14,17). They were deceived by Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. The prophet sees that Assyria did not care about his promises and broke the covenant (verse 8).

Because of the presence of hostile Assyrian bands, no one dares to go in the streets anymore (cf. Jdg 5:6). Isaiah also sees in the spirit how terrible this destroyer (verse 1) will rage against cities and people. Also the land will have to deal with the invading enemy (verse 9). Not only the nature of Judah and Israel, but also that of other areas will groan under the Assyrian violence.

### Isa 33:10-13 | The LORD Arises

*10 “Now I will arise,” says the LORD,  
“Now I will be exalted, now I will be lifted up.  
11 “You have conceived chaff, you will give birth to stubble;  
My breath will consume you like a fire.*

12 *"The peoples will be burned to lime,  
Like cut thorns which are burned in the fire.  
13 "You who are far away, hear what I have done;  
And you who are near, acknowledge My might."*

The prayer of Hezekiah and the prayer of the faithful remnant in the future will be answered. The betrayal of the king of Assyria is reason for the LORD to intervene in the coming verses, also in the future. The time has come when the LORD will "arise" and "be exalted" and "be lifted up" (verse 10; cf. Isa 52:13). These are three descriptions that He is about to act.

While speaking He performs and assures in a threefold manner that He "now" – three times in this verse! – will intervene. The Hebrew word for now, *attah*, sounds enormously powerful, almost explosive. Sound and meaning belong together here in an impressive way. He will arise from His throne to judge His enemies. He, that is the Lord Jesus, will show Himself in His fullness, in all His majesty.

Then the nullity of everything Assyria has planned will become apparent. What they carry with them, their plans, turn out to be nothing more than "chaff" and "stubble", food for the fire of God's judgment (verse 11). By His breath, the LORD will set the chaff and the stubble on fire. Not only their plans will come to nothing, but they themselves also will be judged as a result of what they had planned. They will fall into the pit they themselves have dug for others (Pro 26:27).

The judgment on the Assyrians symbolizes the judgment on all peoples (verse 12). The peoples that "are far away", that are not actually gathered with Assyria, are the heathen peoples that are left after the worldwide judgments on the day of God's anger (verse 13). They are told to hear what He has done. Those "who are near", Judah, are called upon to acknowledge the might of the LORD.

### **Isa 33:14-19 | Dwell With the LORD**

14 *Sinners in Zion are terrified;  
Trembling has seized the godless.  
"Who among us can live with the consuming fire?  
Who among us can live with continual burning?"*

15 *He who walks righteously and speaks with sincerity,  
 He who rejects unjust gain  
 And shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe;  
 He who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed  
 And shuts his eyes from looking upon evil;  
 16 He will dwell on the heights,  
 His refuge will be the impregnable rock;  
 His bread will be given [him],  
 His water will be sure.  
 17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty;  
 They will behold a far-distant land.  
 18 Your heart will meditate on terror:  
 "Where is he who counts?  
 Where is he who weighs?  
 Where is he who counts the towers?"  
 19 You will no longer see a fierce people,  
 A people of unintelligible speech which no one comprehends,  
 Of a stammering tongue which no one understands.*

Not only the peoples far away are bewildered. Also in the midst of those who return to Israel there are still sinners (verse 14). They must be purged (Eze 20:38). These rebellious Israelites will not escape judgment either (Eze 20:34-38), for there is no partiality with God.

Next Isaiah asks some questions of conscience. Now that through the judgments the nearness of the LORD is almost tangible, the Israelites – just like Isaiah himself in Isaiah 6 – see themselves in the light of God. Outward confession is not enough. Just as with John the baptist, who had to prepare the way before God, the hearts are now purified.

The result is a God-fearing remnant. They will be able to live “with continual burning” (cf. Heb 12:29), which is in the presence of the Holy One of Israel, because there is nothing to consume in them. With them are present the characteristics mentioned in verse 15 (cf. Psa 15:1-3). This should also characterize us. We should think about this when we watch a movie in which sometimes things are shown and said that conflict with this.

They will dwell on the heights, they will be protected and nourished (verse 16). They will see their King-Messiah in His beauty when He returns to fulfill all promises (verse 17). They will see the great, vast Israel as promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18). That is their reward because they have shut their eyes from looking upon evil (verse 15).

They will meditate on the terror they have gone through (verse 18). All the representatives of the reign of terror under which they have sighed will no longer be there. They are over, forever. The political secretary who notes the tax levied (“he who counts”), the tax inspector who checks the weight of gold and silver (“he who weighs”) and the military commander who checks the fortifications (“he who counts the towers”) will no longer appear.

Yes, the entire oppressive people will have disappeared out of their sight (verse 19). Also their ears will no longer be tormented by hearing a foreign language, because that means that the enemy is in power with them and they are slaves. The enemy is no longer there and also that unintelligible speech and stammering tongue have disappeared.

Paul quotes this verse in modified form in a comparison between the liberating power of the cross and the power of the world (1Cor 1:21). He shows that all the power of the world has not been able to deliver man from his sins, but only keeps him in bondage. The wisdom of God made that deliverance possible through the work of Christ on the cross. This enables the believer to say with boldness: ‘Where have all those enemies gone?’ By the way, this should not make us careless in our life with the Lord, because then such an enemy can just re-emerge.

### **Isa 33:20-24 | The Glory of Zion**

*20 Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts;  
Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an undisturbed habitation,  
A tent which will not be folded;  
Its stakes will never be pulled up,  
Nor any of its cords be torn apart.  
21 But there the majestic [One], the LORD, will be for us  
A place of rivers [and] wide canals*



*On which no boat with oars will go,  
 And on which no mighty ship will pass —  
 22 For the LORD is our judge,  
 The LORD is our lawgiver,  
 The LORD is our king;  
 He will save us —  
 23 Your tackle hangs slack;  
 It cannot hold the base of its mast firmly,  
 Nor spread out the sail.  
 Then the prey of an abundant spoil will be divided;  
 The lame will take the plunder.  
 24 And no resident will say, "I am sick";  
 The people who dwell there will be forgiven [their] iniquity.*

Zion will be seen in glory (Psa 48:1-14). It will be a peaceful dwelling place with a lasting security that will never again be endangered (verse 20). It will be a city where the feasts of the LORD will be held again. The reason for this is that the LORD Himself dwells there (verse 21). The glory of the city is enhanced by the abundance of waters. However, no hostile warships will sail on those rivers.

The LORD is their "judge", He shall exercise justice over the enemies. He is their "lawgiver", He gives His law in their hearts. He is their "king", the Anointed One over Zion Who rules with a fulness of blessing. Finally, He is also their Savior, Who created this glorious state by saving His people from their sins and their enemies (verse 22). He is their perfect strength. In Him Israel will have his Divine King, Who will grant everything His people need to these people. It is based on a complete redemption.

In themselves, the people are weak and incapable of keeping the state of Israel, as if it were a ship, afloat (verse 23). Yet it will be given to them to divide the spoil of the enemy and the crippled will receive the strength to take plunder. Physical and mental illnesses belong to the past (verse 24). No inhabitant of Jerusalem will have to deal with them. This is closely related to the forgiveness of their iniquities (Psa 103:3).

This state is not yet present. God wants to teach us, as He will teach Israel, that it is impossible to free ourselves in our own strength. He sends us

weakness, that we may learn to be strong in weakness. Jacob had to learn this. When he was made physically powerless (Gen 32:25), he learned to rely more than ever on the omnipotent power of the LORD.

Paul learned to boast in his weaknesses, “so that the power of Christ” could dwell in him (2Cor 12:9). The word ‘dwell’ means ‘spread over like a tabernacle’ or ‘overshadow’. It refers here to the peace and protection that Christ gives to those who know they have no strength of their own to go through trials and therefore seek strength with Him. In our trials and tribulations we learn to know the love of Christ in a way that is impossible without these exercises. Then we will be able to say from experience: “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom 8:35-37).

## Isaiah 34

### Introduction

Isaiah 34 and Isaiah 35 are an extension of the subjects of Isaiah 33, namely the judgment of the day of the LORD on the Assyrians (Isaiah 34) – that is, on his allies – and the subsequent millennial blessing of Israel and their land (Isaiah 35). There we find the two final destinations of not trusting the LORD (Isaiah 34) and of trusting the LORD (Isaiah 35). Every human being and every nation either falls under the judgment or inherits the blessing.

Isaiah 34 is about a day of vengeance in which a proud country is smitten with the ban to wasteland, forever. Isaiah 35 is about a day of redemption, when the wilderness is turned into fertile land and there will be everlasting joy.

### Isa 34:1-4 | The LORD's Indignation Against All the Nations

*1 Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples!*

*Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the  
world and all that springs from it.*

*2 For the LORD's indignation is against all the nations,  
And [His] wrath against all their armies;  
He has utterly destroyed them,  
He has given them over to slaughter.*

*3 So their slain will be thrown out,  
And their corpses will give off their stench,  
And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.*

*4 And all the host of heaven will wear away,  
And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;  
All their hosts will also wither away  
As a leaf withers from the vine,  
Or as [one] withers from the fig tree.*

First the judgment is presented, this time not only on Assyria, but also on Edom and in fact on the “nations”, all peoples. It does, however, connect

to the judgment on Assyria, because it is about its allies, the alliance of peoples who have gathered in Edom. Edom is also here the symbol of the peoples who hate Israel (Psa 83:5-8). The nations are summoned to draw near to hear and listen (verse 1), for the LORD has a message for them. He involves all creation as a witness in what follows.

Under the satanic power of the dragon (Rev 12:12-17), the armies of the nations will gather to wipe out the nation of Israel in one great battle (Rev 16:12-16). However, they themselves will be impressively exterminated by the LORD, that is the Lord Jesus, in one great battle (verses 2-3; Rev 19:19-21; Zec 14:3-4).

The judgment concerns not only the earth, but also the heavens and the celestial bodies (verse 4; Mt 24:29; Rev 6:13-14; 2Pet 3:10). The effect of God's actions is like the fall of dry leaves or an overripe fig from a tree. To the Creator in His overwhelming majesty, the nations represent nothing more than a barren leaf or a rotten fig. In the day of judgment He rolls up heaven like a scroll (Heb 1:12; Psa 102:25-26). That is the opposite of what God did in creation. There, in the power of creation, He "stretches out heaven like a [tent] curtain" (Psa 104:2).

### **Isa 34:5-15 | The Sword of the LORD Descends Upon Edom**

*5 For My sword is satiated in heaven,  
Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom  
And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.*

*6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood,  
It is sated with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats,  
With the fat of the kidneys of rams.*

*For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah  
And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.*

*7 Wild oxen will also fall with them  
And young bulls with strong ones;  
Thus their land will be soaked with blood,  
And their dust become greasy with fat.*

*8 For the LORD has a day of vengeance,  
A year of recompense for the cause of Zion.*

*9 Its streams will be turned into pitch,*

And its loose earth into brimstone,  
 And its land will become burning pitch.  
 10 It will not be quenched night or day;  
 Its smoke will go up forever.  
 From generation to generation it will be desolate;  
 None will pass through it forever and ever.  
 11 But pelican and hedgehog will possess it,  
 And owl and raven will dwell in it;  
 And He will stretch over it the line of desolation  
 And the plumb line of emptiness.  
 12 Its nobles—there is no one there  
 [Whom] they may proclaim king—  
 And all its princes will be nothing.  
 13 Thorns will come up in its fortified towers,  
 Nettles and thistles in its fortified cities;  
 It will also be a haunt of jackals  
 [And] an abode of ostriches.  
 14 The desert creatures will meet with the wolves,  
 The hairy goat also will cry to its kind;  
 Yes, the night monster will settle there  
 And will find herself a resting place.  
 15 The tree snake will make its nest and lay [eggs] there,  
 And it will hatch and gather [them] under its protection.  
 Yes, the hawks will be gathered there,  
 Every one with its kind.

In the final judgment on all peoples, the judgment on Edom occupies a special place (verse 5). But first comes the judgment of the LORD on heaven itself, that is, He will bring punishment on “the host of heaven on high” (Isa 24:21). Sin began in heaven through satan’s rebellion, and at the end satan will be “thrown down to earth” (Rev 12:9). Next comes the judgment on the nations gathered in Edom, the people whom the LORD calls: “The people whom I have devoted to destruction.” What has been devoted belongs to God. That it is devoted to destruction means for everything that lives, that it must be killed.

Edom is the brotherly nation and represents all those peoples who should have been closely associated with Israel, but who instead have distinguished themselves by expressing a deep hatred of Judah. That is why Edom is a counter picture of Israel (Gen 25:23; Mal 1:2-3). They have always watched with intense gloating the suffering that has been done to Israel, and they have even taken great pleasure in increasing that suffering (Oba 1:10-15; Amos 1:11).

Edom is the representative of the hatred and gloating of the God-hostile world power. All hostile powers, such as Babylon and Moab, each represent a special form of enmity that is present in all powers, but is particularly prominent in a particular people.

The sword is the sword of God's wrath. That it has become drunk in heaven, means that heaven is completely filled with God's wrath and is purified by that wrath. Thus the sword descends upon Edom and causes a terrible slaughter (verses 6-7; cf. Deu 32:41-43). Small, "lambs", "goats", "rams", that is the common man, and big, "oxen", "bulls", that is the leaders, are killed in mass. The blood flows in enormous quantities (Rev 14:20).

The word "sacrifice" is in Hebrew *zebah*. Zebah is the name of one of the Midianite princes who was killed by the deliverer Gideon and his men after Midian oppressed Israel (Jdg 8:21). This word for 'sacrifice' occurs in the sense of God's judgment only three times in the Old Testament. It occurs in connection with Israel (Zep 1:7-8), with Gog (Eze 39:17,19; cf. Jer 46:10) and here with Edom.

Bozrah is like Teman one of the capitals of Edom. It is also a centrally located fortress in Edom. It is the place where the last massacre will take place before the realm of peace begins (Isa 63:1). That is where the enemies of God's people have gathered to fight against Israel. Their plan will not succeed because Christ Himself will intervene. The day of vengeance that the LORD will then hold is a repayment for all the injustice done to Zion (verse 8). The LORD stands up for Zion.

With the destruction of the inhabitants, the land is also destroyed. By the judgment of the LORD Edom becomes an area reminiscent of hell with ever burning fire and smoke going up forever (verses 9-10; Isa 66:24; Rev 14:11; 19:3). It will also stink horribly there. Throughout the millennial

realm of peace, it will be a monument, a warning, and a reminder of what sin means. There will be total desolation. No one will be there anymore. With absolute precision the vastness and the content of the area will be defined by the LORD, which is indicated by the use of the line and the plumb line (verse 11).

All the glory of Edom is at an end (verse 12). All the proud nobles are gone. A new king will not present himself. The places of his former splendor, the fortified towers or fortified cities, fade away and become abodes of all kinds of unclean and wild beasts and a location of all kinds of weeds (verses 13-15). Just as Jerusalem is an everlasting inheritance for the people of Israel, so Edom will be an everlasting inheritance for the wild beasts of the desert.

In addition to a literal fulfillment of this prophecy of judgment, we can also discover here a symbolic description of the ferocity and corruption in which all the works of the flesh and human efforts end. There is also a play on words in Hebrew between Adam, which is ‘man’, ‘red earth’, and Edom, which is ‘red’.

### Isa 34:16-17 | The Book of the LORD

*16 Seek from the book of the LORD, and read:  
Not one of these will be missing;  
None will lack its mate.  
For His mouth has commanded,  
And His Spirit has gathered them.  
17 He has cast the lot for them,  
And His hand has divided it to them by line.  
They shall possess it forever;  
From generation to generation they will dwell in it.*

Isaiah tells his audience – and us who are reading this now – to seek all these things “from the book of the LORD, and read” in it (verse 16). Isaiah is aware that what he writes is the word of the LORD. Anyone who reads in this book will discover that everything that His mouth has commanded has happened exactly as is said. This can already be seen in creation: “For

He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psa 33:9). Nothing is missing, nothing is lacking.

In exactly the same way His prophetic word will be fulfilled. Each fulfillment will correspond to previous prophecies. He has determined by lot (Num 26:55-56) that His people will own the land and He has determined its division (verse 17; cf. Deu 32:8). Again, He has determined by lot that the wild beasts will receive Edom as hereditary property. So and no otherwise, they will own it and live there forever. He Who governs creation and cares for His creatures is the same Who will carry out every detail of the promise of His Word, in which He cannot be thwarted.

The exhortation to search and read in the Word of God is also addressed to us. It shows that we must make an effort to learn the truth of God's Word. It is not just reading, but *seeking* and reading. The Word must be studied. We must learn to discover its coherence. What applies to the prophetic word, namely that no part or verse stands all on its own, but must be read and compared with other parts or verses (2Pet 1:20), applies to every truth in the Bible. God's Word forms a perfectly coherent whole.

The exhortation to seek and read should not be interpreted in such a way that it is intended only for intellectuals. The heart of every child of God will be touched by this, and will have a desire to seek and read, both personally and together with others (Jn 5:39; Acts 2:42; 17:11; 2Tim 2:2).



## Isaiah 35

### **Isa 35:1-7 | Israel Will Blossoms**

*1 The wilderness and the desert will be glad,  
And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom;  
Like the crocus  
2 It will blossom profusely  
And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
The majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They will see the glory of the LORD,  
The majesty of our God.  
3 Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.  
4 Say to those with anxious heart,  
"Take courage, fear not.  
Behold, your God will come [with] vengeance;  
The recompense of God will come,  
But He will save you."  
5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened  
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.  
6 Then the lame will leap like a deer,  
And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.  
For waters will break forth in the wilderness  
And streams in the Arabah.  
7 The scorched land will become a pool  
And the thirsty ground springs of water;  
In the haunt of jackals, its resting place,  
Grass [becomes] reeds and rushes.*

The extermination of the anti-Christian powers by Christ at His second coming, described in the previous chapter, will be followed by what is described in this chapter: the realm of peace. After the storms of judgment now follows the invigorating calmness of blessing, yes, its full joy (verse 10). Isaiah's heart will have been beating faster as in spirit he looks ahead

and describes this time. The New Testament calls it the time when creation will be freed from its slavery to corruption (Rom 8:21).

Unlike the desolation of Edom, the land of Israel will blossom like a crocus (verse 1). As desolate and empty as Edom shall be, so glorious is what the LORD brings about in the land of promise. As the land of Edom becomes a desert, the desert of Israel turns into a blossoming garden. The glory of the LORD and the majesty of God will be revealed in the fertility of the land as a result of the ruling righteousness (verse 2).

Slack hands will be strengthened, buckling knees will become firm (verse 3). The writer of the letter to the Hebrews encourages the Hebrews with this verse, and also us, when things sometimes seem to get too much for us, when we are in danger of losing courage and giving up hope that the Lord and His kingdom will come (Heb 12:12). If in faith we turn our gaze again to what has been promised to us, our limp hands will start again to work for the Lord and our knees will become firm again, determined to go the way of following the Lord Jesus.

Fear will be banished (verse 4). The vengeance of their God over their enemies will be followed by final salvation. "Behold, your God" applies to the Messiah. The Messiah Who comes is God (Isa 40:9). He will both judge the enemies and bless the remnant. The blind and deaf will be healed (verse 5). The lame will leap and the mute will sing (verse 6).

Although they will not have glorified bodies, they will have recovered, healthy bodies, for sickness must give way in the realm of peace. That does not only concern physical healing. Also spiritually, Israel, the blind and deaf servant of the LORD (Isa 42:19), will be healed by the Messiah, Who is the perfect Servant of the LORD (Mt 12:17-21).

At His first coming, during His life on earth, the Lord Jesus shows the foreshadowing of this, when He opens the eyes of the blind and makes the deaf hear. These wonders are proof that He is the promised Messiah (Mt 11:4-6). He is the Messiah, even though He does not yet assume world domination because the people reject Him. The wonders He does are "the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:5), that is the millennial realm of peace, in which those powers belong. The wonders that the Lord does refer to that. They are a foretaste of that time. That is what Isaiah describes here.

He uses the word “then”, which refers to that time. These wonders are not characteristic for the church.

The terrible situations of sorrow in the great tribulation will give way to the glory of God in the happiness of His redeemed. The wilderness, the scorched land, the thirsty ground, it will all and entirely become fruitful (verse 7). Nature will reap the benefits of the disappearance of the spiritual and human hostile powers and of the presence of the glory of the LORD and His earthly and heavenly people.

### **Isa 35:8-9 | The Highway of Holiness**

*8 A highway will be there, a roadway,  
And it will be called the Highway of Holiness.  
The unclean will not travel on it,  
But it [will] be for him who walks [that] way,  
And fools will not wander [on it].  
9 No lion will be there,  
Nor will any vicious beast go up on it;  
These will not be found there.  
But the redeemed will walk [there],*

The roadway by which God’s people are enabled to interact and communicate with one another will be sanctified to the LORD (verse 8). It is a roadway like the highway on which other nations will also walk, a roadway that runs through the wilderness to Israel (Isa 19:23). It is not possible to go astray or not understand one another. There is only a “Highway of Holiness” on which no unclean person can walk. It is the roadway that leads to Jerusalem.

The roadway in the presence of God is always the roadway of holiness. In that day, when the hearts of men have returned to the LORD, He will lead them to Himself by the Highway of Holiness, to Mount Zion, where His throne will be established and from where His law will go over the whole earth.

That roadway is also a picture of the Lord Jesus. For us He is the way to the Father (Jn 14:6), to have fellowship with Him. Through Him we, New

Testament believers, will be eternally in the presence of the Father in the Father's house.

He is also for His earthly people the only way to all earthly blessings they will enjoy in the realm of peace. This roadway is only for those who have fellowship with God, in their hearts "are the highways" (Psa 84:5). Similarly, in the new Jerusalem there is only one street, "the street" of "pure gold" (Rev 21:21b). There, too, it will be impossible for anything unholy or unclean to come there, nor will it be possible to wander or do anything that contradicts God's glory, of which gold is a picture.

There will be nothing that can be dangerous for the redeemed because they walk in obedience (verse 9; cf. 1Kgs 13:21-24; Jdg 14:5). He is only for the redeemed. They walk the roadway of blessing that the human beings of the past have always wanted to build in the history of the world. All these efforts have caused nothing but misery because everything is based on selfishness and abuse of power. No civilization has been able to eradicate war and disease, despite all the peace conferences and treaties. Only Christ can and will bring order. His return is the only and certain hope for lasting peace.

### **Isa 35:10 | The Ransomed of the LORD**

*10 And the ransomed of the LORD will return  
And come with joyful shouting to Zion,  
With everlasting joy upon their heads.  
They will find gladness and joy,  
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.*

The section concludes with a promise repeated in Isaiah 51 (Isa 51:11) – through which both main sections of the book express the same message of comfort; this is a proof of the unity of the book. In anticipation of the glorious situation described above, "the ransomed of the LORD" will return to the land. No one will be left behind in the land of his exile (Eze 39:28; Mt 24:31).

Instead of ashes on their heads as a sign of mourning, there will be joy upon their heads. This joy will never be disturbed again. The joy of their return will be enhanced by the gladness and joy they will experience when

they have come to the land. All suffering and its manifestations will then be forgotten; they will, so to speak, flee at the sight of all those glorious things, never to return. They have passed away forever.

Thus this third part of the book of Isaiah ends with the “joyful shouting” of “everlasting joy”, like the first and the second part (Isa 12:1-6; 27:2-13). This is reminiscent of the situation of the new heaven and the new earth that will follow thereafter: “And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be [any] death; there will no longer be [any] mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (Rev 21:3-4).

## Isaiah 36

### **Introduction**

#### **Overview of the intersection – Isaiah 36-39**

#### **Isaiah and Hezekiah – Assyria and Babylon**

The intersection includes Isaiah 36-39 and can be divided as follows:

1. The siege and deliverance of Jerusalem (Isaiah 36-37)
2. The illness of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38)
3. The envoy from Babylon (Isaiah 39)

Isaiah 36-39 contain the historical part of the book of Isaiah. They largely correspond with the description of the history of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 29-32. The histories mentioned in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles are part of “the vision of Isaiah” (Isa 1:1; 2Chr 32:32).

The fact that these histories are also described by Isaiah means that they also have a prophetic meaning. The historical description of the Assyrian armies’ attack on God’s people and God’s salvation of His people in Isaiah 36-37 is an example of what will happen in the end time. The same goes for Isaiah 38-39, in which the mortal illness of Hezekiah and his restoration and the visit of the envoy from Babylon are described. This informs us about the exile of the people and the deliverance from it. Both events take place shortly afterward, but also refer to the end time.

Isaiah 36-37, which deal with the invasion and the humiliating retreat of the Assyrians, are the historical fulfillment and illustration of what Isaiah prophesied in previous years and what is recorded in Isaiah 7-35 (Isa 10:12-19,33-34; 14:24-25; 30:28-31; 31:8). Isaiah 38-39 containing the story of the illness, restoration and failure of Hezekiah, form the historical basis for the second major part of the book, Isaiah 40-66.

In the prophetic previous part the prophet described the actions of the Assyrians. He also pointed out to God’s people that this enemy will corner them because of their unfaithfulness to the LORD. He spoke sternly

to them not to be deceived into entering into anti-Assyrian alliances. God uses the Assyrians as a disciplinary rod for His people. The only way to be saved and happy is that of repentance and trust in the LORD.

Isaiah also spoke time and again about the fact that the LORD will wipe out the Assyrians. In Isaiah 36-37 we see the other side. We see how Isaiah encourages Hezekiah when he is cornered by the Assyrians. Hezekiah is a pious king. He is a type of the faithful remnant of Israel in the future. The LORD wants to save Israel and use it as a servant, but that is only possible if Israel wants to go the way of faith. God always encourages those who trust in Him. For the unbelievers, God does not have such encouragement. Nor do they trust in Him and seek their support from allies.

### Isa 36:1-3 | March to Jerusalem

*1 Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. 2 And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field. 3 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him.*

Hezekiah is a pious king. The LORD is with him. When Sargon, the father of Sennacherib, dies four years ago, Judah, together with many other nations, including Egypt, casts off the yoke of the king of Assyria and serves him no more (verse 5b; 2Kgs 18:5-7). That is why Sennacherib goes up against Judah. He takes all the fortified cities – forty-six in number – except Jerusalem (verse 1). The last fortified city, Lachish, has almost fallen. An important part of Egypt's army was defeated in the battle of Eltekeh, thirty kilometers west of Jerusalem. This fulfilled the prophecies about Egypt (Isaiah 20; 30-31).

The march to Jerusalem in 701 BC has already been described by Isaiah (Isa 10:28-32). Jerusalem is kept in a wonderful way and the enemy is destroyed in a supernatural way (Isa 37:36). Ultimately, Isaiah 36-37 are about the end of the times of the nations, the full redemption of Israel, and the beginning of the realm of peace.

What follows in verse 2 precedes what is written in 2 Kings 18 (2Kgs 18:14-16). There we read that Hezekiah is oppressed and sends an envoy to the king of Assyria to ask him for the conditions to buy off the threat. The king of Assyria imposes a great tribute on Hezekiah, which he pays with all possible means. Instead of leaving now, the king of Assyria sends Rabshakeh, or chief officer, from Lachish – an important city in Judea between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean, which he has seized – with a large army to Jerusalem (verse 2). He commits treason (Isa 33:1). Such is the enemy: after the money he also wants the souls.

Rabshakeh, or chief officer, stands at the place where Isaiah met King Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, and foretold him the march to and the conquest of Judah by the king of Assyria (Isa 7:3). In this way the Holy Spirit reminds us of the contrast between the faith of Hezekiah and the unbelief of Ahaz. It is a place that speaks of cleansing (water) and whitening (fuller's field), both of which can only be obtained by faith.

After Rabshakeh has called for the king (2Kgs 18:18), Hezekiah sends three distinguished officials (verse 3) to the place of meeting. Hezekiah does not go himself, possibly because he is ill at that moment (Isa 38:1).

### **Isa 36:4-10 | Rabshakeh's Speech**

*4 Then Rabshakeh said to them, "Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, "What is this confidence that you have? 5 I say, 'Your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words.' Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? 6 Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, [even] on Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. 7 But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'? 8 Now therefore, come make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. 9 How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master's servants and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10 Have I now come up without the LORD's approval against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'""*



Rabshakeh, who also speaks Hebrew, begins a boasting speech in these verses against the delegation of Hezekiah. He proves to be a cunning diplomat. He presents his king in all his power. Against that greatness he places the total helplessness of everything on which Hezekiah – whom he consciously does not call a king – and the people trust. In this way he wants to frighten his opponents, so that they give up every resistance as useless.

Rabshakeh represents his great king and speaks on his behalf (verse 4). First he aims at the trust of the people. If the trust can be eroded, victory is within reach without a long battle. This is also an important question for us: What is our trust based on? As soon as our trust in the Lord is gone, the enemy has gained the victory.

Rabshakeh mentions three things on which, according to him, Hezekiah and the people rely. Do they sometimes rely on propaganda, on firm statements, on encouraging each other (verse 5)? *Talking* about policy is not the same as vigorously *implementing* it. No, you don't win a war with a big mouth or woolly language. Do they then put their trust in someone else? Yes, he knows, they trust in Egypt (verse 6). But that trust won't help either. It will even turn against them. Instead of being helped by it, they will be wounded by it.

Rabshakeh here talks to the people in the same spirit as Isaiah did with regard to Egypt (Isa 30:3,5; cf. Eze 29:6-7). This will have given their confidence an extra blow. Isaiah appealed to Judah on their trust in Egypt and severely warned of the consequences. Now they hear it from the mouth of the enemy who surrounded Jerusalem. So Rabshakeh is aware of their plan to use Egypt as an ally!

Here we see that the search for protection with people against other people fails. Only if we seek our protection with the Lord we will not be ashamed. Not that Hezekiah himself has made this covenant. That is what the responsible leaders have done who do not have the faith of Hezekiah. Yet it is said to Hezekiah, because he is the king and therefore ultimately responsible whether he knows about it or not.

Rabshakeh has another argument to reach his goal. With the previous two arguments he aimed mainly at the people and their leaders. Now he wants to hit Hezekiah. Hezekiah has strongly expressed his trust in the LORD

(verse 7). The people have pronounced the same. But Who exactly is this God? It is a God from Whom you apparently can remove altars just like that and Who does nothing against it. And then Hezekiah also determines that this God can only be worshiped before one particular altar. What kind of God is that?

Sowing doubt about God has always been satan's strongest weapon. If our trust is not based on the God Who revealed Himself in the Bible as His perfect Word and in His Son Jesus Christ, satan will succeed in sowing doubt with us. There is only one object of worship and that is the Lord Jesus. Everything else must be removed. The world will call that narrow-mindedness; for the believer, every removal of the wrong means more freedom.

Again Rabshakeh mocks the powerlessness of Hezekiah (verse 8). In great arrogance he proposes to make a bet. He gives two thousand horses if Hezekiah can supply two thousand riders for them. With this he emphasizes the hopeless position of Hezekiah. On the other hand he exalts the heroism of even the smallest soldiers of his lord's army (verse 9). Yes, he indeed believes that Hezekiah – in reality the leaders of the people – has placed his trust in Egypt (Isa 31:1). After all, Hezekiah himself has no power at all.

In his discouragement rhetoric, Rabshakeh uses his last argument. It is about the will of the LORD (verse 10). Perhaps he has heard of the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 10:5) and is responding to it. Very confidently he says that the LORD has sent him with the command to destroy the land. Such a reference to the will of the LORD must surely deprive Hezekiah of the last bit of courage.

Such an assertion has a paralyzing effect on people who do not have their own fellowship with the Lord and are not personally independently occupied with God's Word in order to learn His will.

### **Isa 36:11 | Defense of the Envoy**

*11 Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah said to Rabshakeh, "Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand [it]; and do not speak with us in Judean in the hearing of the people who are on the wall."*

It seems that Rabshakeh has reached his goal. The delegates are afraid that the people will be impressed by Rabshakeh's speech. Humble, almost slavish – they speak to him about themselves as “your servants” –, at least in an attitude unworthy of the people of God, they ask Rabshakeh not to speak in Judean, Hebrew, but in Aramaic. At that time Aramaic was the language used by diplomats in international consultations. The mass of the people didn't understand that language.

As an application we can say that the enemy uses a combination of biblical expressions and modern theology to undermine our faith.

### Isa 36:12-20 | Continuation of the Speech

*12 But Rabshakeh said, “Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to speak these words, [and] not to the men who sit on the wall, [doomed] to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?” 13 Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean and said, “Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. 14 Thus says the king, ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you; 15 nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, “The LORD will surely deliver us, this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” 16 Do not listen to Hezekiah,’ for thus says the king of Assyria, ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, 17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18 [Beware] that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, “The LORD will deliver us.” Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? 20 Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD would deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”*

Rabshakeh uses the submissive request of the envoy (verse 11) to humiliate the people even more deeply (verse 12). What they fear is exactly what he wants. He goes even further. He portrays the men as so starving that they eat their own dung and drink their own urine. Not that this is already the situation, but he predicts it will be so. That's why they are better off with just surrendering. Then they will be better off, as he says further on.

Rabshakeh comes even closer to be heard even better (verse 13). Everyone must hear what the great king of Assyria has to say. They should not trust Hezekiah (verse 14). He is an impostor who will not be able to save them. Neither should they believe the talk of Hezekiah about the LORD that He will be able to save them (verse 15).

Then Rabshakeh asks for surrender and to come to him out of the city (verse 16). If they do, they may first feast on their own fruit trees and on water of their own cistern. Then he will give them a land that is as good as the one they live in now (verse 17). With this he makes an allusion to exile, but presents it as pleasant.

Again he presents the trust in the LORD, to which Hezekiah has called, as useless (verses 18-20). Once again he points to undeniable achievements. In his pride he equates the LORD with the powerless idols of other conquered countries. It is a ploy of satan to put the God of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, on a par with the idols of, for example, islam and buddhism.

In listing the gods of the various countries, the name of "Samaria" (verse 19) must have particularly affected the envoys of Hezekiah and the people who were listening. After all, Samaria is their brother nation which, precisely because of their idolatry, has been delivered by the LORD into the hand of the king of Assyria, who has deported them and scattered them.

### **Isa 36:21-22 | Report to Hezekiah**

*21 But they were silent and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him." 22 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of Rabshakeh.*

Rabshakeh's words do not have the effect he intended. The people do not enter into discussion, nor do they panic, but remain silent (verse 21). Hezekiah ordered this reaction. That is not to say that the words of Rabshakeh have done nothing at all. The delegates have been deeply impressed (verse 22). Their torn clothes speak of a deep indignation because of the blasphem-

mous words of Rabshakeh. The situation seems hopeless to them. Thus they report to Hezekiah.

## Isaiah 37

### **Isa 37:1-5 | Isaiah Is Asked to Intercede**

*1 And when King Hezekiah heard [it], he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD. 2 Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. 3 They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, rebuke and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. 4 Perhaps the LORD your God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'" 5 So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.*

On hearing the report, great dejection takes hold of Hezekiah. Just as the delegates did, Hezekiah tears his clothes (verse 1). He expresses his sorrow and humiliation by covering himself with sackcloth. Thus he enters the house of the LORD to seek in his distress the presence of the LORD.

However, at the same time he feels a need for the support of Isaiah (verse 2). Therefore, he sends an envoy to Isaiah made up of some high officials and elders of the priests. Just like Hezekiah, they are covered with sackcloth. Their appearance matches what they have to say to Isaiah. They tell him of the great need in which Jerusalem finds itself.

We can connect the "distress" with the feelings of persons, the "rebuke" with what happens to the city and the "rejection" with what is done to the LORD. Distress weighs so hard that there is no strength to deliver (verse 3). It means that at that critical moment they are helpless and powerless, so that their downfall is certain.

But with a cautious "perhaps" they indicate that there may still be a glimmer of hope (verse 4). There is nothing in their request that indicates a demand or that they believe they have a right to salvation. With this request they acknowledge that they only hope for grace. This is reminiscent of the efficacy of "the Spirit of grace and of supplication" (Zec 12:10).

Their hope lies in the faithfulness of the LORD to Himself and to a remnant chosen by Him (cf. Zechariah 13-14). The enemy has ventured “to reproach the living God” (cf. 1Sam 17:26). Would Isaiah not want to pray that the LORD, for the honor of His Name, will deliver the remnant from the grip of this enemy? With this message the delegation comes to Isaiah (verse 5).

### Isa 37:6-7 | The Answer of Isaiah

*6 Isaiah said to them, “Thus you shall say to your master, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.”’”*

The faith of Hezekiah does not remain unanswered. God never fails to answer anyone who entrusts everything to Him. He promised: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me” (Psa 50:15). The answer Isaiah has is encouraging. He does not have to pray first, because the LORD has already given him a word that he may give to this envoy (verse 6).

They are allowed to go to Hezekiah with the encouraging message: “Do not be afraid.” Isaiah said the same to Ahaz earlier (Isa 7:4), but unfortunately he did nothing with this encouragement. The word of the prophet only has a powerful effect for those who want to believe.

Hezekiah need not be afraid of all that the messengers of the king of Assyria have said and with which they have blasphemed the LORD. “Because he has stretched out his hand against God and conducts himself arrogantly against the Almighty” (Job 15:25), he will soon learn how foolish it is to fight against the Almighty. The LORD will simply put an end to the siege. He will simply ensure that this hostile king will hear a rumor that will bring him back to his land (verse 7; cf. Pro 21:1). There he will come to his end. So powerful is the LORD and so powerless is this king.

### Isa 37:8-13 | Once More Rabshakeh

*8 Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. 9 When he heard [them]*

*say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "He has come out to fight against you," and when he heard [it] he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10 "Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." 11 Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared? 12 Did the gods of those nations which my fathers have destroyed deliver them, [even] Gozan and Haran and Rezeph and the sons of Eden who [were] in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, [and of] Hena and Ivvah?"*

After the, apparently negative, reaction of Hezekiah to the threatening boast of Rabshakeh, Rabshakeh returns to his lord to report to him (verse 8). The king of Assyria then finds himself with an army in Libnah. After the report of Rabshakeh, the king would certainly have gone against Jerusalem if he had not heard a rumor, so he doesn't go up (verse 9) together with the army that is already around Jerusalem to take the city. This is a fulfillment of the first part of the promise of the LORD in verse 7.

What the king still does is to make it clear once more to Hezekiah that he should not cherish the illusion that Jerusalem will be spared (verse 10). In the previous chapter he accuses Hezekiah of deceiving his people; now he goes even further and accuses God of deceiving Hezekiah. Now he tries again to undermine the faith of Hezekiah by writing to him that his trust in his God will prove to be useless. Surely, Hezekiah has heard that no one has been able to withstand the kings of Assyria, hasn't he (verse 11)? So he must not think that he will be saved.

The word "behold" means that what the king now says are facts that everyone knows. The king's persuasive argument consists of concrete facts which can all be traced. All the gods of those peoples have not benefited those peoples (verse 12). To Sennacherib, the God of Israel is no different than all the other gods. Let Hezekiah tell him where all the kings of those conquered nations are (verse 13). Hezekiah will share in their fate.

With the exception of the living God, Sennacherib's argumentation is strong and irrefutable. But the exception is no small thing. That the God of Israel, the living God Who created heaven and earth, is no more than the



idols of other peoples, is the biggest mistake Sennacherib and with him the rest of the world can make. The king of Assyria will soon learn the difference between the dead idols of the nations and the living God whom Hezekiah trusts.

### Isa 37:14-20 | The Prayer of Hezekiah

*14 Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. 15 Hezekiah prayed to the LORD saying, 16 "O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned [above] the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 17 Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent [them] to reproach the living God. 18 Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, 19 and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. 20 Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God."*

The king of Assyria sent the message of the previous verses in writing to Hezekiah. When Hezekiah has taken in the contents, he goes to the temple again (verse 14; verse 1). At the beginning of the threat Hezekiah also went to the temple, but then to take the gold from it and give it to Sennacherib to buy off the threat (2Kgs 18:15-16). Now it says that he 'goes up to the house of the LORD' to present his need to the LORD.

First he spreads out the letter before the LORD, as it were, to let Him read them. Then he prays and presents his need to the LORD (verse 15). He makes his problem a problem of the LORD. The prayer that Hezekiah pronounces is one of the most beautiful expressions of a burdened heart that we find recorded in Scripture. The prayer is short and purposeful. It is pure in its words.

He begins to pronounce the greatness of the LORD (verse 16). With that greatness every earthly opposition will be diminished to nothing. Not that Hezekiah sees no longer difficulties now. He asks this great God not to remain blind and deaf to his supplication. He asks the LORD not to let all

the pruning words that Sennacherib has spoken about Him pass Him by. After all, are they words with which “the living God” is reproached (verse 17). Hezekiah is not concerned with what has been said to him personally, but with what has been said to the LORD. Hezekiah knows the LORD as the living God (cf. verse 4). That makes an enormous difference with the gods of the nations, because they are all dead idols.

Hezekiah does not belittle the victories of the kings of Assyria (verse 18). He does not close his eyes to the facts and acknowledges what is true in the words of the enemy. However, the fact that their gods were unable to save them is no wonder to him. They are gods you can throw into the fire because they are gods made by human hands (verse 19). Let God now show His majesty by delivering His helpless people from the power of the king of Assyria (verse 20). That will be a testimony to all kingdoms of the earth that the LORD alone is God! Hezekiah seeks the salvation of the nations.

### **Isa 37:21-29 | The LORD Judges Assyria**

*21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent [word] to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, 22 this is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:*

*“She has despised you and mocked you,  
The virgin daughter of Zion;  
She has shaken [her] head behind you,  
The daughter of Jerusalem!*

*23 “Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?  
And against whom have you raised [your] voice  
And haughtily lifted up your eyes?  
Against the Holy One of Israel!*

*24 “Through your servants you have reproached the Lord,  
And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I came  
up to the heights of the mountains,  
To the remotest parts of Lebanon;  
And I cut down its tall cedars [and] its choice cypresses.  
And I will go to its highest peak, its thickest forest.*

*25 ‘I dug [wells] and drank waters,*

*And with the sole of my feet I dried up  
 All the rivers of Egypt.'*  
 26 *"Have you not heard?  
 Long ago I did it,  
 From ancient times I planned it.  
 Now I have brought it to pass,  
 That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps.*  
 27 *"Therefore their inhabitants were short of strength,  
 They were dismayed and put to shame;  
 They were [as] the vegetation of the field and [as] the green herb,  
 [As] grass on the housetops is scorched before it is grown up.*  
 28 *"But I know your sitting down  
 And your going out and your coming in  
 And your raging against Me.*  
 29 *"Because of your raging against Me  
 And because your arrogance has come up to My ears,  
 Therefore I will put My hook in your nose  
 And My bridle in your lips,  
 And I will turn you back by the way which you came.*

Shortly after his prayer Hezekiah receives the answer of the LORD which He has made known to the prophet Isaiah (verse 21). Isaiah does not bring Hezekiah the answer himself, but has it conveyed by messengers. This answer is given in the form of a mocking song, similar to the ending of the song of Deborah (Jdg 5:24-30).

The prayer of Hezekiah is a prayer with a subject. It concerns "Sennacherib, the king of Assyria". It is good that we also go to the Lord with concrete subjects and not pray in general terms. We may then expect a concrete answer.

The answer therefore contains a word of the LORD about Sennacherib (verse 22). The answer is in the form of a poem. We see that the LORD is not impressed by the king of Assyria. On the contrary. He puts Jerusalem despised by Sennacherib words of contempt and mockery in the mouth to speak to this king. Jerusalem, the daughter Zion, will contemptuously shake her head behind him over his humiliating retreat that the LORD will cause of troops that have seemed so invincible.

The LORD takes the matter seriously. The core of the whole situation is shown by two questions in which the answer is included. Against whom are those slanderous words directed? Against the powerless little remnant? Against Hezekiah? No, the king of Assyria has dared to lift himself up against the Holy One of Israel, the three times holy God (verse 23; Job 15:25).

Through his servants he has expressed his contempt for the Almighty by pretending that the LORD does not exist (verse 24). He has acted in confidence on his own strength and insight, full as he is of his own 'I'. Full of self-confidence he speaks of 'I will this' and 'I will that' (verses 24-25). He sums up what he has accomplished.

All this haughty speech shrivels when the "I" of the LORD sounds (verse 26). The question "have you not heard?" emphasizes the ignorance about what the LORD is doing. He asks this question here to the heathen king of Assyria. Soon He will ask the same question to His people (Isa 40:21,28). In their pride people think they can govern the history of the world. They will discover that God controls everything.

The LORD has made come what He had been planning for a long time. By this He means the use of the Assyrians for the execution of His plan. That degrades the mighty king of Assyria to just an instrument in God's hand doing nothing but carrying out God's plan (verses 26-27). As a result he has been successful in his enterprises, he has been able to destroy cities and kill their inhabitants. But he did not think of God Who enabled him to do so.

The LORD exposes the heart and deliberations of the king of Assyria (verse 28; cf. Psa 139:2-4; Heb 4:12). The LORD is the Omniscient. He shows that the king of Assyria rather raged against Him. In doing so, this bloated king has sealed his own judgment. The LORD has heard his pride (Psa 94:9a). He will cause his strength to be broken and that he will have to withdraw (verse 29).

### **Isa 37:30-35 | The LORD for Hezekiah**

30 *"Then this shall be the sign for you: you will eat this year what grows of itself, in the second year what springs from the same, and in the third year*

*sow, reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 31 The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. 32 For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” 33 “Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, ‘He will not come to this city or shoot an arrow there; and he will not come before it with a shield, or throw up a siege ramp against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he will not come to this city,’ declares the LORD. 35 ‘For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.”*

In the previous section the LORD has spoken about and to the king of Assyria (verse 22). In verse 30 He addresses Hezekiah and promises him a sign of deliverance. This sign does not come before, but after the deliverance. When the sign is fulfilled, it is proof that the LORD has worked the deliverance. Because of the siege they could neither reap nor sow. After the deliverance they will eat what has risen by itself from the fallen out grains of the previous year. After that they will be able to sow again and eat the fruit at the set time.

The prophet uses this as a picture of the people themselves. Just as there will be a harvest left for the people, so there will be a new flowering season of the people after the judgments (verse 31). This will happen through a “surviving remnant” (verse 31; verse 32), which will go out of Jerusalem (verse 32). The LORD will take care of this in His zeal for His people. This will happen after the church has been raptured.

The prophecy ends with the assurance that the king of Assyria will not be a threat in any way (verse 33). He will not be able to make any attempt to conquest, but will move away from the city (verse 34). The LORD defends the city and will save it (verse 35). He has two reasons for this. The first reason is His own connection with the city. He has attached His honor to it and therefore He protects it. The second reason is His promise to His servant David, the man after His own heart.

He has given Jerusalem to David and in David to the true David, the Messiah, the coming King, Who once will reign in righteousness in the city of peace. The LORD here prophetically gives the promise of the restoration of

Israel in the millennial realm, immediately after the supernatural destruction of the Assyrian.

### **Isa 37:36-38 | The Enemies Killed**

*36 Then the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead. 37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned [home] and lived at Nineveh. 38 It came about as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.*

After the comprehensive answer to the prayer of Hezekiah, the Angel of the LORD kills 185,000 men the next night (verse 36; Isa 31:8a). This judgment must have been carried out silently by the LORD. Only when it becomes morning do the survivors see the drama of the night and its extent. The sight of this enormous number of corpses must have been awe-inspiring. After this immense loss, Sennacherib is forced to withdraw and settle in Nineveh (verse 37).

This great blow also has a prophetic meaning. The Angel of the LORD is the Lord Jesus. He executes the judgment here. He will do the same in the end time with the king of the North and other hostile powers (Rev 19:19-21). It is mentioned without fuss.

From the way the king of Assyria comes to his end, a loud message goes out. Those who ignore God in spite of the many proofs he has received of His existence, find their end in the area he worships instead of God. The fool seeks salvation in the temple of his self-conceived and self-made god (verse 38). While he worships that dead god in that temple, at the same place the vengeance of the living God strikes him by means of the sword with which his sons kill him. An idol is completely powerless even in its own temple. Not only the Assyrian army, but also its king falls prey to the judgment of the living God.

## Isaiah 38

### Introduction

The personal history of Hezekiah in this chapter complements the foreshadowing of Israel's restoration in the previous two chapters. In those two chapters it is about the outer restoration, while in this chapter it is about the inner, spiritual restoration.

### Isa 38:1-3 | Illness and Prayer of Hezekiah

*1 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'" 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, 3 and said, "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.*

"In those days", i.e. the days of the king of Assyria's invasion of Judah and his siege of Jerusalem, Hezekiah becomes "mortally ill" (verse 1). Isaiah must even tell him that he is going to die and that, in view of his death, he must arrange certain things for his house. He has to make his will. Then Hezekiah turns his face away from anything that might distract him – no one is allowed to see his face either – and devotes himself to prayer (verse 2).

Weeping bitterly, which shows his great sorrow, he speaks to the LORD about how his heart and his deeds have been completely focused on Him after all (verse 3). He wants so badly to continue to live. That men do not weep is a foolish thought. Intense sorrow should not be suppressed, but may be expressed to the Lord (Lam 2:19).

To the Israelite, the wish to continue living is absolutely justified. After all, a long life is promised to him if he is faithful. Hezekiah has been faithful. To have to die has something in it of the anger of God. He is not that old yet, he is around forty years old. In addition, the state of the land is bad and he has no heir to the throne. Although his prayer does not contain a

clear request for an extension of his life, the LORD knows what occupies the heart of Hezekiah.

In the prophetic sense it is about the work that God is going to do in the heart of the believing remnant in the future. They too will be saved from death that threatens by the danger from outside, the Assyrian, and the danger from within, the beast and the antichrist. The LORD allows this to teach the believing remnant to pray with confession of their sins – like Joseph’s brothers in prison and like the ten days preceding the day of atonement are characterized by confession of sins. This confession is necessary because of the two great sins of Israel: the rejection of the Messiah and idolatry or the acceptance of the antichrist.

### **Isa 38:4-8 | Promise of Healing and Deliverance**

*4 Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, 5 “Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. 6 I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.”’ 7 “This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that He has spoken: 8 Behold, I will cause the shadow on the stairway, which has gone down with the sun on the stairway of Ahaz, to go back ten steps.” So the sun’s [shadow] went back ten steps on the stairway on which it had gone down.*

Isaiah may convey to Hezekiah the answer of the LORD to his prayer (verse 4). It is an answer of grace (verse 5). The LORD says nothing about the faithfulness and wholeheartedness to which Hezekiah appealed. There is also no reproach. The LORD answers as “the LORD, the God of your father David”. All compassion for anyone who calls upon Him is based on the Lord Jesus, the true David.

The reference that the LORD is the God of David recalls the promise that the lineage of David will never cease. At that moment Hezekiah does not yet have a son to succeed him. Manasseh is only born three years later. The promise of God of the announcement of the death and, as it were, resurrection of Hezekiah, of which the third day speaks (2Kgs 20:5; Hos 6:2), are a wonderful illustration of how God will soon restore Israel. It will be life



from the dead (Rom 11:15), the resurrection of their dead, the dead body will rise (Isa 26:19; Eze 37:1-14; Dan 12:1-3).

God also lets Hezekiah know that He has seen His tears (verse 5). He even collects them and records them in His register, His Divine library (Psa 56:8). He does not write them down because He could forget them, but to show us how important they are to Him.

Hezekiah gets fifteen extra years. The LORD also confirms the promise that the king of Assyria will not get hold of the city (verse 6). Here it appears that the illness of Hezekiah, his prayer and the answer to it chronologically precede the deliverance of Jerusalem described in the previous chapter. The Holy Spirit is therefore concerned here with the moral order and not with the historical one.

Hezekiah asks the LORD for a sign, in contrast with Ahaz (Isa 7:10-14). Ahaz has refused to believe, Hezekiah has the desire to trust the LORD. The LORD promises a sign as proof that He will do what He has said (verse 7). This sign consists of an intervention in the course of nature (verse 8; cf. Jos 10:12-13a). Just as the return of the sun goes against the natural laws given by God, so the LORD will heal the illness of Hezekiah against nature. The healing of Hezekiah is connected with God's power over the sun. The sun is a picture of a ruler. Powers must give way when the LORD stands up for His people, His remnant. God triumphs over the illness of Hezekiah and also over the rulers who made His people suffer so much.

By letting the sun go back, the LORD makes that day last longer than normal. As wonderful as this operation is, so wonderful will the extension of Hezekiah's lifespan be. To make this sign visible the LORD uses the stairway of Ahaz, the idolatrous and ungodly king, who made this stairway as an idolatrous object. The stairway indicates that time progresses in the direction of judgment. By God's power, the stairway makes it clear that He makes the time of grace last longer, thus delaying the judgment and allowing grace to overcome the judgment.

### Isa 38:9-20 | Thanksgiving Song of Hezekiah

9 *A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery:*

10 *I said, "In the middle of my life*

*I am to enter the gates of Sheol;  
I am to be deprived of the rest of my years."*  
11 *I said, "I will not see the LORD,  
The LORD in the land of the living;  
I will look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.*  
12 *"Like a shepherd's tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me;  
As a weaver I rolled up my life.  
He cuts me off from the loom;  
From day until night You make an end of me.*  
13 *"I composed [my soul] until morning.  
Like a lion —so He breaks all my bones,  
From day until night You make an end of me.*  
14 *"Like a swallow, [like] a crane, so I twitter;  
I moan like a dove;  
My eyes look wistfully to the heights;  
O Lord, I am oppressed, be my security.*  
15 *"What shall I say?  
For He has spoken to me, and He Himself has done it;  
I will wander about all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.*  
16 *"O Lord, by [these] things [men] live,  
And in all these is the life of my spirit;  
O restore me to health and let me live!*  
17 *"Lo, for [my own] welfare I had great bitterness;  
It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness,  
For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.*  
18 *"For Sheol cannot thank You,  
Death cannot praise You;  
Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness.*  
19 *"It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today;  
A father tells his sons about Your faithfulness.*  
20 *"The LORD will surely save me;  
So we will play my songs on stringed instruments  
All [the] days of our life at the house of the LORD."*

The historical part of Isaiah 36-39 can also be found, as already mentioned, in 2 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 32. An exception is the above section.

This makes immediately clear that the first meaning of this part is not practical, but prophetic. It is written as a psalm of thanksgiving, but with the structure of a lamentation. It is a funeral song which suddenly has become a birth and life song. It also consists of two parts:

1. A supplication because of the illness and suffering of Hezekiah (verses 10-14).
2. A song of thanks for the healing and new life of Hezekiah (verses 15-20).

Hezekiah undergoes his illness and healing as if from the hand of the LORD. It has brought him into deep exercises. He feels the need to write down these exercises (verse 9). In it we recognize much of what we read in the book of Psalms about the feelings of the remnant that is in great need. It is the spirit of Christ, Who connects Himself with the remnant and Who also works in Hezekiah. The suffering of Hezekiah is also the suffering of the remnant in the great tribulation, of which they acknowledge it comes over them because of their sins.

As a son of David, Hezekiah is also a picture of the Lord Jesus. What he experiences here is also a picture of what the Lord Jesus has undergone. He tasted the suffering of death (Heb 2:9), not for His own sins, but for those of His people. He offered up supplications to be saved from death, and He was heard (Heb 5:7). He was given an extension of life, not just fifteen years, but for eternity (Heb 7:17).

In verse 10 death is presented as if it had gates through which a person enters (cf. Job 38:17; Psa 9:13). In his illness Hezekiah sees himself confronted with death in the middle of his life, through which he cannot fulfill his years. This connects with the feelings prophesied by the Lord Jesus (Psa 102:23-24a; cf. Lk 23:31). "In the middle of my life" is literally "on the balance of my days". Balance means halfway. This is true for Hezekiah, for the Lord Jesus, but also for the people of Israel.

In his illness he thinks with anguish that this means the end of his fellowship with the LORD and with people (verse 11). He will no longer be able to ascend to the temple (Psa 27:4). He feels how because of his illness his body, "tent", is pulled up and removed (verse 12; cf. 2Cor 5:1; 2Pet 1:13-14). He compares the LORD with a weaver. Just as a weaver rolls up the fabric (cf. Isa 22:17-18a) because the weaving is finished, so Hezekiah sees

his life as ended. He reinforces that thought by talking about being 'cut off from the loom'.

He feels he has been given up by the LORD to the sorrows of death without being able to get rest (verse 13). He also feels it as something that suddenly comes over him. At the end of both verse 12 and verse 13 he says: "From day until night You make an end of me." With this he seems to indicate a sudden, dramatic change in his circumstances: in the morning he is still perfectly healthy, in the evening he is dead.

In yet another picture he sees the LORD as a lion that breaks all his bones. He experiences this action of the LORD so severe, that he says again that he feels the pain of it day and night. He is not free of it for a second. He no longer has the strength to shout. His voice is weakened to the twitter of a swallow and the moaning of a dove (verse 14).

Hezekiah does not compare with these birds for nothing. They are birds which symbolize in a peculiar way the connection with the presence of the LORD (Psa 84:3; Mk 1:10). He longs for the nearness of the LORD, but he experiences distance and rejection. His longing eyes turn upward, while he expresses his fear to the LORD and asks Him to stand surety for him (Job 17:3a) that he will not be given up to the realm of the dead.

Now that he has expressed in this way the feelings he had during his illness, has experienced them again as it were and that he is now healed, he does not know what else to say (verse 15). After all, the LORD has spoken that he would die and also that he would heal. He has recovered and after the bitter suffering of soul he will be allowed to live for years.

He lives by this act of the LORD with him (verse 16). What he has received from the LORD has given him back his spirit power. This is not only because of the fact and the moment of the healing, but also at the moment that the LORD has given him the promise. The saying 'hope springs eternal' is true for all who continue to trust that God will fulfill all His promises.

A profound change has taken place. The bitter trial has turned into salvation (verse 17). This salvation is so great because the trial has been so great and bitter. Hezekiah knows that he was close to the pit of nothingness, to the moment his life would come into it. This has nothing to do with completely ceasing to exist. It is about the disappearance from the world stage.

He would disappear into the grave and no longer be seen. It would seem as if he no longer existed, but the LORD saved him from that fate.

He sees in it the proof that the LORD has cast all his sins behind His back (cf. Mic 7:19). If Hezekiah had died, he would no longer be able to praise the LORD on earth (verse 18). He does not yet know that the deceased believers live in the presence of the Lord Jesus (Lk 23:43). And Paul even longs to depart to enjoy complete fellowship with Him (Phil 1:23).

The expectation of the Old Testament believers was that one day they would rise and enjoy the blessing of fellowship with the LORD (Job 19:25-27; Psa 17:15). For Hezekiah, the praise of the LORD is connected to life on earth (verse 19). He also wants to pass this on to his sons, to the next generation (Psa 22:30-31; 71:18). A father is someone who tells his children about the faithfulness of the Lord.

Although we, as New Testament believers, as members of the church, are connected not with the earth but with heaven, our life on earth must also have this great characteristic: that it is an ongoing song of praise to the glory of the Lord Jesus (Heb 13:15; 1Pet 2:5). We may begin on earth with something that we will continue for all eternity and that is: to worship the Father in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23). Let us pass this on to the next generations, until the Lord comes to take us to Himself.

In verse 20 Hezekiah moves back to the moment when Isaiah tells him on behalf of the LORD that he will be healed. Hezekiah is so pleased about this, that he involves his whole people – as is shown by the word “we” – in the joy of this. The place where that joy is expressed is at the house of the LORD. It is also not a short-lived expression, but an expression that will be there “all [the] days of our life”.

### **Isa 38:21-22 | Medicine and a Sign**

*21 Now Isaiah had said, “Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil, that he may recover.” 22 Then Hezekiah had said, “What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?”*

Hezekiah has prayed for recovery and Isaiah has told Hezekiah the hearing of his prayer. Isaiah did not set up a prayer healing campaign to frame the already promised healing with display. He has used a means of heal-

ing that is known for its healing effect (verse 21). Hezekiah had an evil boil, and it is believed that the cake of figs attracted the poison that was in the body. In any case, the healing was done by the power the LORD gave to the cake of figs.

The promise of recovery has not been unconditionally believed by Hezekiah, but has revealed some weakness of his faith. He may have received the promise that he would recover and the medicine may have been applied, but he also asked if a sign could be given (verse 22). The reason he wanted to recover does speak of love for the LORD for he wanted to recover in order to go up to the house of the LORD.

## Isaiah 39

### Introduction

This chapter is important because in the second main part of Isaiah, Isaiah 40-66, we are no longer in the days of Hezekiah, nor in the days of Isaiah, but in days further in the future. These are days when Israel is in Babylonian exile and close to the end of it. In order to understand these prophecies, we must move in spirit to the end of Babylonian exile. For that purpose, what is announced in Isaiah 39 must first be fulfilled. Jerusalem must have been destroyed and all the treasures and all the people of Judah must have been transported to Babylon.

This chapter answers the question of why God, Who is able to deliver Judah from the hand of Assyria, has had Judah carried away to Babylon. We also see here the necessity of the deliverance described in Isaiah 40-66.

Isaiah speaks in the second part of his book to a people who still have to be carried away into exile, while he does so in a way that gives the impression that this exile is almost over. The message is this, that God has chosen a special tool to end the Babylonian empire. This tool is Cyrus, the Persian. Through this tool God will work a return of a remnant to His land. In Cyrus we can see a type of Christ, God's perfect Servant, Who will bring about the ultimate, true salvation for Israel.

### Isa 39:1-2 | The Envoy From Babylon

*1 At that time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered.  
2 Hezekiah was pleased, and showed them [all] his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and his whole armory and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.*

The king of Babylon, who at that time was still an insignificant empire, finds in the illness and recovery of Hezekiah reason to send him a letter and a present (verse 1). The miracle of the sun's shadow going back

ten steps on the stairway also raised questions with him (2Chr 32:31a). Possibly he wants to seek support from Hezekiah in his fight against the Assyrians. Even more, it seems that he sent spies to see what treasures and weapons Hezekiah has. But behind all this there is God Who wants to put Hezekiah to the test (2Chr 32:31b).

With this letter Hezekiah does not enter the temple to submit it to the LORD, as he did with the threatening letters of the king of Assyria (Isa 37:14). This is a danger to which we are all exposed. When the world threatens us, we go to the Lord, but when the world flatters us, we feel honored and go with the world. When the world reaches out the hand of friendship to us instead of making a fist of enmity against us, we are quick to accept the outstretched hand. It is one of the greatest dangers that can threaten to eliminate us as witnesses of our heavenly Lord.

Hezekiah feels caressed by this visit (verse 2). He tries to make the best possible impression on the envoy. For this he shows all his treasures, without withholding anything. This also includes his "whole armory". He acts as if it is all his and leaves the LORD out of it. For Hezekiah Babylon is a powerful ally against Assyria. Hezekiah now puts his trust in people instead of in the LORD.

The treasures Hezekiah shows have a spiritual meaning. In Scripture, "silver" is a picture of the price paid for atonement. "Gold" speaks of the glory of God. "Spices" represent the various glories of the Lord Jesus. "Oil" is a picture of the Holy Spirit.

What Hezekiah does is what the Lord Jesus warns against: "Do not throw your pearls before swine" (Mt 7:6a). The Lord Jesus warns not to do that, for the swine – a picture of the heathens – will trample the pearls under their feet, turn around and tear in pieces whoever throws them to them. This is what will happen to Hezekiah, i.e. his offspring.

The same will happen to us if we start to consider precious spiritual truths – of which the treasures of Hezekiah are a picture – as our own possessions and forget that we have received them from the Lord. Then we will 'show them off' and they will be taken away from us by those who we want to impress with it.



**Isa 39:3-4 | Isaiah Comes to Hezekiah**

*3 Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?" And Hezekiah said, "They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon." 4 He said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them."*

Hezekiah's conduct stems from self-exaltation (2Chr 32:25). He forgets that he owes everything to the LORD. Therefore, Isaiah comes to him (verse 3). Isaiah asks him what those men have said and where they have come from. The king does not answer the first question, but the second one he does answer. Then Isaiah asks what they have seen. Hezekiah's answer shows how flattered he felt by the visit from the distant Babylon (verse 4). Doesn't he know the prophecies Isaiah spoke about the God-hostile Babylon (Isa 14:1-6)?

Hezekiah apparently does not feel guilty. Nor do the questions of Isaiah penetrate his conscience. The spirit of the envoy from Babylon still hangs around him. He has opened himself to it because he has forgotten that he lives in presence of the LORD. That makes him insensitive to the fact that with Isaiah the LORD comes to him and speaks to him.

Babylon, which means 'confusion', presents professing Christianity as a system that wants to rule. In order to realize this, the various church leaders of the various denominations try to make all kinds of agreements. We see this in the pursuit of ecumenism and in the world council of churches. If true believers let themselves be tempted to participate, it is because they have forgotten their heavenly calling.

The flattery of the Christian world is a great danger. It can make beneficial use of the knowledge of the Bible and the spiritual treasures of heavenly minded believers. They also like to display them when they are invited to do so. Then the Christian world shows us what it has to offer: attractive music, sounding names, a lot of brilliance, spectacular healings, results achieved in the social field and a program for world improvement. It appeals to our feelings, our eyes and our ears. If we open ourselves to it, our conscience will become insensitive to the presence of God.

**Isa 39:5-8 | Being Carried to Babylon Foretold**

*5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts, 6 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the LORD. 7 'And [some] of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'" 8 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good." For he thought, "For there will be peace and truth in my days."*

On behalf of the LORD Isaiah must pronounce judgment on Hezekiah for what he has done (verse 5). Everything that the envoy has seen will be carried to Babylon. Just as Ahaz trusted in Assyria, but would be oppressed by him (Isa 7:17), so the consorting of Hezekiah with Babylon will cause all the treasures he proudly showed to be carried to Babylon (verse 6). His offspring will also suffer this fate (verse 7). Their unfaithfulness and that of the whole people of which they are king will make the exile inevitable. Approximately ninety-five years later, Nebuchadnezzar will fulfill the words of Isaiah and take everything with him in several deportations (2Chr 36:18; Dan 1:2).

Hezekiah bends under this judgment and accepts it as "good" (verse 8). He also foresees that it will still be peace in his days. It does not seem appropriate to accuse him of selfishness and also of insensitivity to his offspring. Rather, he is aware that the LORD has not acted with him according to what he deserves, but gives him *by grace* that he may spend the rest of his life in peace (2Chr 32:26).

## **Isaiah 40**

### **Introduction**

#### **Overview main part 2.1 – Isaiah 40-48**

#### **The sovereignty and promise of the LORD**

The first part of the second main part (Isaiah 40-66) includes Isaiah 40-48 and can be divided as follows:

1. Good news for Jerusalem (Isaiah 40:1-11)
2. God, the Incomparable (Isaiah 40:12-31)
3. God, the Lord of history for His people (Isaiah 41:1-29)
4. The Servant of the LORD (Isaiah 42:1-25)
5. Grace abundant and despised (Isaiah 43:1-28)
6. Israel's great God and the folly of idolatry (Isaiah 44:1-23)
7. God's acts through Cyrus for Jerusalem (Isaiah 44:24-45:25)
8. The useless idols and the LORD Almighty (Isaiah 46:1-13)
9. The fall of the proud Babylon (Isaiah 47:1-15)
10. God's purpose of grace (Isaiah 48:1-22)

#### **Introduction to Isaiah 40**

With Isaiah 40 begins the second great main part of Isaiah that continues to the end of the book. This second main part begins with the promise of the forerunner, John the baptist (Isa 40:3), and ends with the new heaven and the new earth (Isa 66:22).

The first main part focuses especially on the past history of Israel and its future, as well as those of the nations with which it has to deal. It is about the work of God to deliver Israel as a people from the power of the nations – represented by Assyria – and the restoration of Israel as a nation. In the second main part it is mainly about the work of God in the heart, to make the heart turn to Him. For this the people must be delivered from the power of Babylon, prophetically the religious power of the future.

This second main part can be divided into three parts. Each part contains nine chapters:

1. Isaiah 40-48
2. Isaiah 49-57
3. Isaiah 58-66

The subject through all these chapters is twofold. They contain the call to repentance and the promise of salvation. In connection with the first subject, the call to repentance, each part concludes with an earnest warning to the wicked (Isa 48:22; 57:21; 66:24). This same warning marks the division into three parts of nine chapters each.

The call to repentance is based on the faithfulness of God. God remains faithful despite our unfaithfulness. This is shown in Isaiah 7-39. For everyone who wants to trust Him, like King Hezekiah (Isa 37:1-4,14-20), there is always salvation. The same goes for Israel (Isa 44:24-26). Serving the LORD is only possible for Israel if the people learn to trust in the undeserved grace of God, a God Who, despite their disobedience, offers salvation without money and without price (Isa 55:1).

In the first part, Isaiah 40-48, the prophet speaks to the people because of their idolatry. He presents two contrasts to the people:

1. the contrast between the LORD God of Israel and the idols, and
2. the contrast between Israel and the nations.

Idolatry is the first great sin of Israel, especially of the ten tribes realm.

In the second part, Isaiah 49-57, his indictment is that they rejected the Messiah. In this part he presents the contrast between the suffering of the Servant of the LORD and His future glory. The rejection of the Messiah is the second great sin of Israel, especially of the two tribes realm, Judah.

In the third part, Isaiah 58-66, he shows the contrast between the hypocrites and rebels, the apostates who follow the antichrist, and the faithful and persecuted, the believing remnant of Israel.

In each of the three parts we see an aspect of the actions of the triune God:

1. The Person of the Savior – presented by God (Isaiah 40-48).

2. The work of salvation – performed by the Son, the perfect Servant of the LORD (Isaiah 49-57).

3. The salvation – effected by the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 58-66).

God's actions for Israel will take place in grace and love (cf. Jer 31:2-3). In this second main part of Isaiah we see the result of these actions of God in the hearts of the believing remnant of Israel.

The first part (Isaiah 40-48) speaks of several glories. We read about the glory

1. of the LORD (Isaiah 40; see Isa 40:5),
2. of His counsel (Isaiah 41),
3. of His grace (Isaiah 42-43; see Isa 43:25),
4. of His promises (Isaiah 44-45) and
5. of His power (Isaiah 46-48).

The famous, unparalleled Isaiah 53 is the middle chapter of the second (middle) part of these three parts of Isaiah.

Since it is clear from the first part of Isaiah (Isaiah 1-39) how the true condition of the people of Israel is, the question arises whether this is the end of the book of Isaiah. Does the judgment on Israel – Maher-shalal-hash-baz, means 'swift is the booty, speedy is the prey', the name of the second son of Isaiah (Isa 8:1) – have the last word? The answer is a surprising one. God is not a God with whom judgment has the last word. He is a God of salvation – after all, that is the meaning of the name 'Isaiah'. This is now shown in the second part of Isaiah, Isaiah 40-66, where the meaning of the name of the first son of Isaiah, Shear-jashub (Isa 7:3) – meaning 'a remnant will return' – will be fulfilled.

Verses 1-11 are the introduction to a new section. In four balanced stanzas a foundation is laid for the message given to us in the rest of the book. In it we see confirmed that from now on the message is not judgment, but

1. the restoration of Israel (verses 1-2);
2. that restoration is a personal intervention of God (verses 3-5);
3. that no power of men will be able to stop it (verses 6-8);

4. that thereby the gospel of God's power and mercy is proclaimed (verses 9-11).

### **Isa 40:1-2 | Comfort for God's People**

*1 "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God.*

*2 "Speak kindly to Jerusalem;*

*And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,*

*That her iniquity has been removed,*

*That she has received of the LORD's hand*

*Double for all her sins."*

These verses are in fact the title of the second main part of the book. This chapter begins with words that are a great encouragement to the suffering faithful remnant now and also prophetic in the great tribulation. The prophet Isaiah is instructed to comfort the people of God. God wants to comfort His people through His prophets (cf. 1Cor 14:3). They are comforted by their God Who knows the urgent need for this (verse 1). Hence the repetition of the word 'comfort'. It is the fulfillment of the promise of Isaiah 12 (Isa 12:1).

Comfort literally means 'deep sighing, relief'. That is why this second part of Isaiah is also called 'the Book of Comfort' with Isaiah 53 as the center and climax. It is also telling that the dwelling place of the Lord Jesus on earth is the village of Capernaum. Capernaum means 'village of comfort'. The words "says your God" mean that this comfort is only promised to those who are in relation to God, to whom "your God" can be said. These words also imply the certainty of comfort because *God* says it.

The order of comfort is emphasized by adding to "speak kindly to Jerusalem", literally it says "speak to the heart of Jerusalem". This means that comfort must be spoken to Jerusalem because God wants to win the heart through comfort (verse 2; cf. Gen 50:21; Rth 2:13; Hos 2:14). For the time of her suffering is almost ended and her iniquity is removed. The punishment is almost over and she will soon be able to go out freely, away from Babylon, back to God's land and city.

The call "call out to her" has the meaning "declare!", "proclaim!" Then three things are mentioned:

1. The time of her suffering is accomplished. The punishment – that is time of suffering, battle, originally: military service – is over and she can go out freely, away from Babylon, back to God’s land and city.
2. Her iniquity has been removed – “He was crushed for our iniquities” (Isa 53:5a).
3. She has received double for all her sins – the exile and the great tribulation have done their work in heart and conscience, as it did with Joseph’s brothers in prison (Genesis 44-45).

The foundation for the removing (or: atonement) will be laid by the Lord Jesus, the Servant of the LORD, on the cross (Isa 53:1-12). God’s holiness is satisfied through the atonement that will be made through the work of His Son, of which the value to Him is predetermined. Because of this, He can also allow to let the sins previously committed go unpunished (Rom 3:25). Now that she has acknowledged her iniquity, there is complete forgiveness.

She has received for “all her sins”. There is nothing more that requires judgment. That she has “received double” for her sins – that is, that she has received the full what she deserved (Isa 61:7; Jer 16:18) – is in accordance with the law (Exo 22:4). There is not only loss of property to be compensated for, but there is also emotional damage – God is dishonored – to be met. It may mean here that judgment has been exercised to the fullest extent on the double sin she has committed: idolatry (Isaiah 40-48) and rejection of the LORD and His law and Word (Isaiah 49-57). Instead of this, there is a double comfort: “Comfort, O comfort.”

In the New Testament God reveals Himself as Comforter in three Persons. God the Father is the “God of all comfort” (2Cor 1:3). The Holy Spirit is called “Comforter” several times by the Lord Jesus (Jn 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; “Helper” is “Comforter”). The Lord Jesus is also called the Comforter. The word “Advocate” in 1 John 2 can also be translated as “Comforter” (1Jn 2:1). Also the fact that the Lord calls the Holy Spirit “another Comforter” (Jn 14:16), means that the Lord Jesus is the Comforter for His disciples until the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The hallmark of the Lord Jesus is “to comfort all who mourn” (Isa 61:2b). Thus, in our way on earth, we may rejoice in the great privilege of the en-

during presence of the triune God Who comforts us when we experience disappointments.

In the end time there is also a double suffering of the remnant. The people have been in exile for many centuries now. Many have already returned to the land, many will return. Only now everything is still happening in unbelief. Because of the rejection of the Messiah and leading idolatry at its peak in accepting the antichrist, a man who declares himself to be God and erects an image to the beast in the temple (Rev 13:14), the people will experience another terrible time. That time is known as 'the great tribulation'.

God will gather the nations against His people and discipline His people through the nations. Under that discipline, the believing remnant will suffer as much as the wicked mass. But the remnant will suffer double. They will suffer both from the enemies who are invading the land from *outside* of Israel and from the antichrist and the ungodly mass who are *inside* of Israel. In the realm of peace this remnant will receive double compensation (Isa 61:7).

### Isa 40:3-5 | Clear the Way for the LORD

3 A voice is calling,  
"Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;  
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.  
4 "Let every valley be lifted up,  
And every mountain and hill be made low;  
And let the rough ground become a plain,  
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;  
5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
And all flesh will see [it] together;  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

The comfort of verse 1 is not based on the good works of the people. It is also not because the exile has been long enough and the punishment has been sufficiently suffered. No, the comfort comes from the personal coming and intervention of the LORD: their God comes (verse 3)!

The return of a remnant from Babylon to the promised land is worked by the LORD (Ezra 1:1), so that the promised Messiah may be presented to



His people. By a herald presented here as “a voice” that “is calling” the coming of the LORD can be announced, a coming by which the full blessing of God in the realm of peace can come to His people.

That is what we see happening in the Gospels. The blessing that is announced is that the kingdom of heaven has come near (Mt 3:2) because the promised King, the Messiah, has come and is about to appear in public. The herald is John the baptist. The four writers of the Gospels make this clear (Mt 3:1-3; Mk 1:1-4; Lk 1:76-78; Jn 1:23). We see through the quotation of verse 3 in the New Testament that the Godhead of the Lord Jesus is clearly taught here by the prophet Isaiah.

“Clear” means ‘removal of obstacles’. The reception of the Messiah happens, in other words, not because the punishment is over, but by removing obstacles. “The way” is the way of salvation (Isa 11:16) and is similar to the deliverance out of Egypt. It is the highway for the LORD, not a literal one, but a spiritual one. On this way the LORD will come with redemption and salvation.

Their spiritual state is like “the wilderness”. It is the beginning of God’s work in the heart of the people when the people become aware of it. They are far from God and thirsty for Him (Psa 63:1b; 42:1b-2).

However, the preaching of John the baptist has not been heard. Christ is rejected and therefore the promised kingdom of peace cannot be established. But He will “appear a second time” (Heb 9:28). This will happen in the end time.

“Every valley be lifted up” indicate all those who have been in the valley of humiliation and who will eventually be exalted in the realm of peace (verse 4). It also applies to those who now humble themselves voluntarily (Jam 4:10; 1Pet 5:6; Lk 18:14; Job 5:11). Every mountain and hill be made low has the opposite meaning. All those who lift themselves up will be humiliated.

What is “rough ground”, uneven, will become “plain”, smooth and even. For example, there will no longer be speaking with double tongues. The intentions will be pure. What is “rugged terrain”, the rough places where nothing grows, will become a fertile “broad valley”. In places where no life is possible, everyone will be able to enjoy life as the LORD purposed.

In the preaching of John the baptist recorded by the evangelist Luke, Luke refers to these verses from Isaiah (Lk 3:4-6). Luke is the evangelist who shows that the grace of God has appeared to all men. In order to see that grace and share in it, there must be the right spiritual mind.

1. "Every mountain and hill be made low" refers to the pride of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Lk 3:7-9). All who exalt themselves will be humbled.
2. What is "rough ground" refers to the tax collectors who walk crooked ways because of greed for money. They will become a plain, a straight road if they do not collect more than has been ordered to them (Lk 3:5b,12-13).
3. What is "rugged terrain" or rough refers to the rough soldiers. John tells them how to become "smooth roads" (Lk 3:5b,14).

In this changed situation, the glory of the LORD will become visible to "all flesh ... together" in all creation, that is, to all who then live (verse 5; Rev 1:7a). Then the words of the seraphim will be fulfilled: "The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa 6:3).

Thus we see that

1. the return from Babylon is connected with
2. the time when the Lord Jesus comes to earth in humiliation, which because of His rejection is then connected with
3. His return in majesty to judge and rule.

The closing line of verse 5, "for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken", emphasizes the certainty of the things which are proclaimed here. These words are similar to the words of the Lord Jesus that we often hear in the Gospel according to John: "Truly, truly, I say to you."

### **Isa 40:6-8 | The Flesh Opposite the Word of God**

*6 A voice says, "Call out."*

*Then he answered, "What shall I call out?"*

*All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.*

*7 The grass withers, the flower fades,*

*When the breath of the LORD blows upon it;*

*Surely the people are grass.*

8 *The grass withers, the flower fades,  
But the word of our God stands forever.*

After describing the glorious state of things in verses 3-5, another voice is heard, giving the command to call out (verse 6). As a reaction to this, the question sounds, what should be called out. The first calling out, in verse 3, has as contents the glory and splendor of the LORD. This second calling out has as content the nullity of man.

The answer to the question of what to call out is twofold. A twofold statement must be made. On the one hand, the perishableness of the flesh is proclaimed; on the other hand, the imperishableness of the Word of God is proclaimed (verses 7-8; 1Pet 1:23-25). What God *says*, He *is* (Jn 8:25). Hence, just as He Himself is eternal, His Word is eternal. The Word is also a Person (Jn 1:1; Rev 19:13).

All the glory on which the unbelievers of Israel boast will perish, while what God has said and Who He is will stand forever. God's Word is fulfilled to the smallest letter (Mt 5:18). The unbelieving mass will wither like the grass. This is a well-known picture in Israel of the effects of the hot wind from the wilderness, the so-called *chamsin*. When this wind blows, within two days everything that grows and blossoms is withered. That is what becomes of man without God.

To the believer it is an encouragement to know that the Word of God remains as the unshakeable support when all support in man and from man is lost. The contrast between man's perishable nature and the imperishable Word of God cannot be presented more strongly.

### Isa 40:9-11 | Behold, Here Is Your God

9 *Get yourself up on a high mountain,  
O Zion, bearer of good news,  
Lift up your voice mightily,  
O Jerusalem, bearer of good news;  
Lift [it] up, do not fear.  
Say to the cities of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"*  
10 *Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might,*

*With His arm ruling for Him.  
Behold, His reward is with Him  
And His recompense before Him.  
11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock,  
In His arm He will gather the lambs  
And carry [them] in His bosom;  
He will gently lead the nursing [ewes].*

Now that everything is turned for the better for Zion, that is Jerusalem, Zion is called to climb on a high mountain (verse 9). In the realm of peace, Mount Zion will be the highest of all mountains (Isa 2:2), while all of Judah will be like a plain (Zec 14:10). The proclamation of the gospel will come from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). This is about the good message that God Himself has come to redeem Israel. Zion may pass this message on to the other cities of Judah. Jerusalem in the Old Testament is the starting point for the revelation of the glory of God.

Through the rejection of the Lord Jesus, God's glory has disappeared from Jerusalem (Eze 10:4,18-19; 11:22-23). But now God has returned in Christ. Of this they must, with strength and without fear (cf. 2Tim 1:7), herald the joyous message to all the cities of Judah. They may proclaim it: "Here is your God!" or "Behold your God!" (Darby Translation). It is the great message that the Messiah, Who is God, has come to His people and has delivered Zion. The prayer of Psalm 14 has been answered (Psa 14:7)! From Zion comes the Savior (Rom 11:26).

We also see the call "behold" concerning the Lord Jesus in other places, some of which we can connect with the way He is presented in the Gospels:

1. Here we read: "Behold your God" (Isa 40:9). This refers to the Gospel according to John, where we see the Lord Jesus as *God the Son*.
2. We will hear again: "Behold, My Servant" (Isa 42:1). This reminds us of the Gospel according to Mark, where He is presented as the *Servant*.
3. Then we also hear: "Behold, a man whose name is Branch" (Zec 6:12). This reminds us of the fact that He is truly *Man*, Whom we meet especially in the Gospel according to Luke.

4. Finally, it sounds: "Behold, your king is coming to you" (Zec 9:9). This determines us at the Gospel according to Matthew, in which He is described as *King*.

After the first "behold" in verse 9, two times another "behold" follows in verse 10 as an assurance that the Savior really has come. Through the one "behold" the eye of the cities of Judah is directed toward Him Himself, "the Lord GOD". He will also show His power for them and they will experience that He takes His dominion. The other 'behold' draws attention to what He has with Him. He has "His reward" with Him for the faithful, and for the enemies of His people He has "His recompense" with Him. He is the Conqueror, He is the Judge.

These three times 'behold' also show us that Israel will get to know Christ in three ways:

1. "Behold your God." When Christ is revealed to Israel, the people will realize that Christ is the God of Israel. Now Israel denies the Godhead of the Lord Jesus, but then the veil will be removed from their faces. In that day, the people will be very willing (Psa 110:3). Like Thomas, who is a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel, they will come to the confession: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28).
2. "Behold, the Lord GOD." With might He will come, and His arm will rule. Israel will also discover that the Lord Jesus is also the sovereign Ruler, the "Lord" (*Adonai*), the King of Israel and the King of kings, and "GOD" or the "LORD" (*Yahweh*), the God Who fulfills all His promises. Like Nathanael, who is also a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel, they will acknowledge: "You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel" (Jn 1:49).
3. "Behold, His reward is with Him, ... like a shepherd ..." (cf. 1Pet 5:4). The remnant of Israel will also discover that the Lord Jesus is the true "good Shepherd" and the "great Shepherd" of Israel (Jn 10:11; Heb 13:20). At His first coming, He comes as the good Shepherd, but is rejected by Israel. Then He gives His life for His sheep, who are scattered (Jn 11:52). At His return He will be the great Shepherd, risen from the dead, and will gather the little ones, the remnant, to Himself (Zec 13:7).

When the LORD comes and the call "behold your God" sounds, we see

1. how Israel has received double from the *hand* of the LORD for all their sins (verse 2);
2. how the *mouth* of the LORD gives the assurance that His glory will be visible (verse 4);
3. how the *breath* of the LORD will destroy all enemies and all unbelief (verse 6);
4. how the *arm* of the LORD grants salvation and at the same time tenderly cares for His sheep (verse 8).

“Like a shepherd” He will gather all His scattered sheep together and surround them with particular care (verse 11; Jn 10:11-16). He will “tend” His flock, so that the sheep may be given rest and food. He will “gather” the little ones and the vulnerable in His loving and all-powerful arms to protect them.

He will lead the “nursing”, those who are to feed the young, with all gentleness, without rushing them (cf. Gen 33:13-14). Thus, for each member of the God-fearing remnant, He has the attention that fits the stage of spiritual growth.

We find here an example for those entrusted today with the care of God’s flock (1Pet 5:2-3). It takes a lot of dedication and discernment to follow this example of the Lord Jesus in dealing with the various categories that make up the flock. The Lord teaches us the need to deal with those entrusted to our care with tender compassion and grace (cf. Jn 21:15-17).

### **Isa 40:12-18 | God Can’t Be Compared to Anyone**

*12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,  
And marked off the heavens by the span,  
And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure,  
And weighed the mountains in a balance  
And the hills in a pair of scales?*

*13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,  
Or as His counselor has informed Him?*

*14 With whom did He consult and [who] gave Him understanding?  
And [who] taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge*

*And informed Him of the way of understanding?  
 15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,  
 And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales;  
 Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.  
 16 Even Lebanon is not enough to burn,  
 Nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering.  
 17 All the nations are as nothing before Him,  
 They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.  
 18 To whom then will you liken God?  
 Or what likeness will you compare with Him?*

Verses 1-11 form the prologue of this second main part of the book of Isaiah. In it we see Who He is Who intervenes for the redemption and comfort of His people. From verse 12 onward the prophet testifies of the incomparable features of their Creator-God Who cares for them. They need to become aware of His infinite greatness, attributes and power.

Thus Isaiah presents Him in contrast to the idols of the peoples around them that they have served (verses 15-17) and to the nature of the idols and their makers (verses 18-20). This leads to a renewal of comforting certainties (verses 29-31). In the light of the majesty of God it becomes clear how insignificant the idols are. So it goes with the gospel. When the Lord Jesus is presented, everything else pales because nothing gives the satisfaction He gives.

In verses 12-14 Isaiah asks two series of questions. The first series is about God's omnipotence (verse 12) and the second series about God's omniscience (verses 13-14). First he gives some examples of God's omnipotence (verse 12) opposite to the smallness of man:

1. What can the hollowness of a human hand contain of water? A few milliliters? God measures in the hollow of His hand all oceans and other areas of water.
2. What can a man measure with a span, that is the distance between thumb and little finger? About twenty centimeters? God marked off the whole expanse of heaven.
3. What is the content of a human measure? A few liters? In the measure of God goes all the dust of the earth.

4. What can a human being weigh on a scale? A few kilograms? God determines the weight of mountains and hills and thus regulates the balance of the earth.

God's omnipotence is immeasurably great and impressively far exalted above man, whose possibilities and power, compared to this, are totally insignificant and disappear into nothingness. This is further emphasized by the fact that in Hebrew the verb for 'measuring' (verse 12) and 'directed' (verse 13) is the same. The question is therefore: Man, who is not even able to measure creation (the waters), does he want to try to measure the Creator, the Spirit of the LORD?

God's omniscience is just as far exalted above man's knowing (verses 13-14):

1. Is there outside the Spirit of the LORD a standard by which He can act, someone who tells Him what to do and how to do it?
2. Does He need education from someone else in order to walk in the right way toward His goal?

What is said here of the Spirit of the LORD shows that He possesses a combination of the abilities of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. In other words: He does not need a 'think tank', a heavenly workgroup or daily board with whom He must consult and who advises Him. He Who is called "Wonderful" and "Counselor" (Isa 9:6) really does not need instruction from a counselor.

The questions are similar to some questions God asks Job (Job 40:6-9; 41:1-7). In the indicated sections God points out to Job the differences between man and (parts of) His creation. Here in Isaiah God compares Himself to man.

But He is exalted in still more things. He, as the Ruler of the nations, has absolute control over everything. This control never gives Him any problem and never gives Him any difficulty. It is with His control over the nations as with a drop on a bucket of water: that extra drop does not give the bearer any extra burden (verse 15). It's like with a dust that floats down on a pair of scales: the scales don't move. With islands He acts as a speck of dust that is lifted by a gust of wind and thus blown away.



As the One Who is worthy of all worship, what is truly due to Him can never be brought to Him. Never can a human being make a sacrifice that fully expresses Who He is. All the wood of the forests on the Lebanon is simply not enough to serve as firewood and there are not enough beasts to be offered on it (verse 16). The only wood that satisfies God is the wood of the cross of Calvary. No other offering than that of the body of Jesus Christ is of value to God. Whatever the privileged Jew might sacrifice Him, it always falls short of the glory of His Being. The nations do not count at all because of their depravity (verse 17).

Is there anything to compare God with (verse 18)? To ask the question is to answer it. The Creator can be compared with nothing of His creation. In simple and therefore powerful terms the majesty of the most high God is painted in this section.

### **Isa 40:19-20 | The Nullity of an Idol**

*19 [As for] the idol, a craftsman casts it,  
A goldsmith plates it with gold,  
And a silversmith [fashions] chains of silver.  
20 He who is too impoverished for [such] an offering  
Selects a tree that does not rot;  
He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman  
To prepare an idol that will not totter.*

After Isaiah demonstrated the nullity of all human knowledge and ability in the light of God's omnipotence and omniscience, he bitinglly mocks the idols (verses 19-20). He pours out his sarcasm on the idolaters and the idol worshipers. He shows how foolish it is to worship something from creation as a god.

He describes two idols. One idol is cast by a craftsman out of metal and covered with gold and decorated with silver. The other idol is of a poor man who goes with a piece of wood to a craftsman to turn it into an idol that doesn't totter. Both idolaters use material that God has created and both idols are made by people with abilities that God has given them. God is the Creator of all things and all people and therefore can't be compared

to anyone! Surely it is foolishness at the top when tiny creatures think they can form the eternal God, isn't it?

### **Isa 40:21-26 | God's Majesty**

21 *Do you not know? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been declared to you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?*  
22 *It is He who sits above the circle of the earth,  
And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,  
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain  
And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.*  
23 *He [it is] who reduces rulers to nothing,  
Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless.*  
24 *Scarcely have they been planted,  
Scarcely have they been sown,  
Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth,  
But He merely blows on them, and they wither,  
And the storm carries them away like stubble.*  
25 *"To whom then will you liken Me  
That I would be [his] equal?" says the Holy One.*  
26 *Lift up your eyes on high  
And see who has created these [stars],  
The One who leads forth their host by number,  
He calls them all by name;  
Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of [His] power,  
Not one [of them] is missing.*

In verse 21 Isaiah asks four questions. This is not about seeing, but about hearing. Hearing is connected with the Word of God (verse 8), spoken through the mouth of the LORD (verse 6). It is a contrast with verses 19-20 where it is about seeing the idols. Isaiah asks his questions in a so-called 'chiastic' order, in which the first and the last belong together as do the middle two. This order is represented as follows: a, b, b, a. In verse 21 the order is

- a. know,
- b. heard,
- b. declared,
- a. understood.

This way of presenting is a powerful way of teaching. Because of this, the questions penetrate deep into the conscience and force the person addressed to think carefully about them.

Those who do not know (a) from creation and acknowledge that God has laid the foundations of the earth, that He created everything – this is further demonstrated in verses 22-26 –

will be deprived of the knowledge of His will through preaching (b) and through declaration (b),

because his understanding is obscured (a).

The wonders of nature should work in us admiration for the Maker.

In verses 22-24 Isaiah speaks alternately about God's position, might and authority in the observable universe and the inhabitants of the earth. To Him heaven is like a curtain that He stretches out and like a tent that He spreads out so that one can dwell in it.

Those who dwell therein on earth are to Him like "grasshoppers" (cf. Num 13:33). Also the most powerful among them, the "rulers" and "judges", are like nothing and become "meaningless". They have predestined themselves or have been predestined by others to experience glorious growth and rise to great heights. Power, major influence and many governmental powers lie ahead. But a sudden intervention of His mighty hand puts an abrupt end to that coveted future (cf. Isa 11:4; 2Thes 2:8).

As in verse 18, where the challenge sounds after showing the insignificance of the nations, in verse 25 the challenge sounds after showing the finiteness of the inhabitants and the disappearance of the rulers. In verse 18 Isaiah asks who can be compared to God. The answer is that He can be compared with nothing. In verse 25 God Himself is speaking as "the Holy One" and asks the same question.

He Himself gives the answer and says that He can't be compared to anyone, "to whom I would be [his] equal?" It is as if He says: It is a testimony of wisdom if you do not dare to make any comparison. It is not about His limitlessness and their nullity, but about His essential and absolute holiness and the self-destruction of His depraved and idolatrous people.

For the third time the people are reminded of the incomparable power of God as Creator (verse 26). Earlier, God as Creator has been pointed out to them in order to impress upon them their own nullity (verse 12) and to remind them of what they should have learned from creation (verses 21-22). Now that reference to the Creator sounds like an order. They must look upward, into the universe. Then they see those countless celestial bodies, which in many religions are worshiped as gods. They are all placed and kept in their orbit by Him.

He also knows them all by name and commands them, they are all under His command. The celestial bodies do not exist and do not move exclusively through natural laws set by the Creator. The Son of God is also the maintaining Center, its Carrier and Ruler (Col 1:16-17). It is He Who “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb 1:3). Only an omnipotent God is able to do this.

### **Isa 40:27-31 | The Eternal God Gives Strength to the Weary**

*27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel,*

*“My way is hidden from the LORD,*

*And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”?*

*28 Do you not know? Have you not heard?*

*The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth*

*Does not become weary or tired.*

*His understanding is inscrutable.*

*29 He gives strength to the weary,*

*And to [him who] lacks might He increases power.*

*30 Though youths grow weary and tired,*

*And vigorous young men stumble badly,*

*31 Yet those who wait for the LORD*

*Will gain new strength;*

*They will mount up [with] wings like eagles,*

*They will run and not get tired,*

*They will walk and not become weary.*

If God is so mightily exalted above creation, *His* creation, could He not help those in need? Would we be worried about the plans of rulers on earth if He governs them? Therefore now comes a message of comfort for

the remnant that prophetically tells their experiences that they are going through in the time of the great tribulation (verse 27).

The believing remnant is addressed here first as Jacob and then as Israel. This is to remind them of their origins, of the meeting of their ancestor with the LORD in Pniel (Gen 32:24-31). That meeting changed Jacob's life. There he becomes of a 'heels holder' – the meaning of the name Jacob – a 'prince or warrior of God' – the meaning of the name Israel. And when does that happen? It happens when he begs for mercy (Hos 12:5).

It seemed that God had given them up to the enemy and no longer thought of them. They thought that their way through the great tribulation was hidden from Him or overlooked by Him. But wouldn't He, Who shows the planets their way, know their way? They thought that He had no regard for their justice and that He had handed them over to enemies full of injustice. But would He, who blows away rulers and governors, withhold the justice from His remnant who trusts in Him?

The considerations expressed in this verse may also be ours. We ask ourselves: 'Why does God allow it? Does He lack power? Is He not interested in us?'

The thought that He would leave them to their fate is unfounded. The double question of verse 28, the same as in verse 21, must also convince them of this. If we are overwhelmed by despair under the pressure of circumstances, we have to get back to the facts we accepted when we came to faith. We may also draw courage from our experiences of God's mercies on previous occasions. He, the Creator of all things, is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

With the same power with which He created the worlds, He is at our disposal. He never gets tired, let alone overtired. His understanding, too, is inscrutable and that is why He knows us and our circumstances. He not only knows our greatest trials, whether they come from within or outside us, but they are under His absolute control. He determines in His wisdom the time and manner of His intervention and our deliverance and that is different and higher than our wisdom.

Instead of getting tired He gives strength to the tired (verse 29). What we must do is open our hearts to receive strength. He is always ready to give

it to us when we undergo trials. Then He changes times of trial into times of blessing. His purpose is that we are aware of our own powerlessness, so that we appeal to His power instead of becoming desperate under oppression.

Even the strongest cannot be sure that he will always be free of weariness (verse 30). That weariness can turn into despondency when the prospect of salvation and the view on the Savior are obstructed. An obstacle on his way can also make him stumble. A sudden event can lead to despondency. The only strength that is inexhaustible and keeps him from stumbling and falling is the awaiting looking up to the LORD (verse 31).

Waiting for the Lord is not just a matter of patience or even desire, but above all that our hope for His outcome is characterized by trust. Then we go “from strength to strength” (Psa 84:6-8), constantly drawing from the source of His power. With wings we rise above the difficulties, to rise above the fog and darkness of the earth and to come into the bright sunlight of God’s presence.

A characteristic of “eagles” is that their plumage is regularly renewed. This is a beautiful picture of the drawing of new strength by those who wait for the LORD (cf. Psa 103:5). Other characteristics of an eagle are speed, sharp smell and a sharp eye. Going up is therefore not only that we rise above the difficulties, but also that we quickly gain insight into the will and the way of God with a sharp eye on Him Himself through faith. If that is our expectation, we will “run”, which assumes effort, but “not get tired”. We will also “walk”, which presupposes fellowship and “not become weary” of it.

## Isaiah 41

### Introduction

The previous chapter shows that no one is equal to the LORD, no people, no idol. In this chapter the LORD speaks at the beginning directly to the peoples (verse 1). He calls them to go with Him in judgment in the courtroom. In the coming chapters the courtroom comes forward several times. The question to be answered is Elijah's question to the people of Israel: Who is God: the LORD or the idols like Baal (1Kgs 18:21)?

The fact that the LORD declares in advance to arouse a conqueror from the east is only an indication that He Himself is the true God, the exalted Ruler of all events on earth (verses 2-4). The idolatry of nations will eventually bring Divine judgments on them. Thereby Israel, as God's chosen people, will be the instrument in God's hand (verses 5-16).

The LORD also does not forget that His people will have to go through a fearful time. In view of that time He offers them a comforting vista of the situation after that fearful time (verses 17-20). Then follows another challenge to the nations. Let them show their ability to foretell the future as God does. They and their objects of worship will turn to nothing (verses 21-29).

God reveals Himself not only in creation, as in Isaiah 40, He is equally concerned with man. In verses 1-4 He reveals His righteousness and judgment to the nations. From verse 8 He shows Himself in grace to Israel.

### Isa 41:1-4 | The LORD Judges the Peoples

1 *"Coastlands, listen to Me in silence,  
And let the peoples gain new strength;  
Let them come forward, then let them speak;  
Let us come together for judgment.*  
2 *"Who has aroused one from the east  
Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet?  
He delivers up nations before him*

*And subdues kings.*

*He makes them like dust with his sword,*

*As the wind-driven chaff with his bow.*

3 *"He pursues them, passing on in safety,*

*By a way he had not been traversing with his feet.*

4 *"Who has performed and accomplished [it],*

*Calling forth the generations from the beginning?*

*'I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He.'"*

God challenges the coastlands – by which may be meant the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea and thus Europe – and the peoples – behind the coastlands – to come together for judgment with Him (verse 1). This is not about condemnation, but about assessing facts and drawing a conclusion from them. They must first listen silently to the facts. Then God encourages them to gather new strength in order to “come forward” to Him and then to “speak” to Him.

God opens the dispute by asking challenging questions in verses 2-4 and establishing facts for His cause. The person involved is Cyrus, the king of Persia (Ezra 1:1). It is a future event, but God presents it as if He has already called Cyrus on the world stage (verse 2). The past perfect tense in which the sentence has been set gives that future event the certainty of a matter that has already happened.

God not only has the ability to *tell* what will happen in the future, but He also has the power to *arouse* a man who will fulfill His Divine purposes. The “aroused one ... in righteousness” means that Cyrus, as the victor, will do what is consistent with God’s purpose. Therefore, this man, Cyrus, will be able to act without anything or anyone being able to stop him. “From the rising of the sun” indicates that he comes from Persia (verse 25). He will advance victoriously and defeat every opponent. The way he goes is a way which he did not invent himself, but which the LORD has determined and commanded for him (verse 3).

Then the question sounds as to who the author of this performance is and by whom it comes that Cyrus is so successful (verse 4). The LORD Himself gives the answer. He Himself stands at the origin and grants Cyrus the progress. He is “the First”, which means that He has a preexistence before



all history and that all things are under His control. He will also bring all things to the end determined by Him. From beginning to end He is the same and acts in complete agreement with His Being. Against that God and that action, the coastlands and the peoples have no answer.

### Isa 41:5-7 | Nullity of Man and His Support

*5 The coastlands have seen and are afraid;  
The ends of the earth tremble;  
They have drawn near and have come.  
6 Each one helps his neighbor  
And says to his brother, "Be strong!"  
7 So the craftsman encourages the smelter,  
[And] he who smooths [metal] with the hammer [en-  
courages] him who beats the anvil,  
Saying of the soldering, "It is good";  
And he fastens it with nails,  
[So that] it will not totter.*

While the called coastlands see the appearance of Cyrus, they are afraid and tremble (verse 5) when God gives him world domination to "the ends of the earth". The same will happen to them in the end time when God's judgments silence them forever.

And how is it that they are so powerless in the face of the omnipotence of God described above? Because they rely on each other and on their void idols (verses 6-7). It is ridiculous to be brave in the face of the omnipotence of God. Once again their idols are mocked from whom they expect salvation (Isa 40:19-20; cf. Ps 2:4).

### Isa 41:8-10 | The LORD Encourages Israel

*8 "But you, Israel, My servant,  
Jacob whom I have chosen,  
Descendant of Abraham My friend,  
9 You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth,  
And called from its remotest parts  
And said to you, 'You are My servant,*

*I have chosen you and not rejected you.*

*10 'Do not fear, for I am with you;*

*Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.*

*I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,*

*Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'*

Then the LORD addresses Himself in this dispute with the nations with words of comfort very personally to His people, that is to say to the God-fearing remnant (verse 8). The contrast with the preceding verses is sharply indicated by the opening words "but you". He speaks to them as "Israel" and "Jacob" and reminds them of His elective grace and the promise of restoration and deliverance.

For this He refers to Abraham. Their earliest history is the guarantee of their irrevocable blessing. He speaks of Abraham as "My friend" (2Chr 20:7; Jam 2:23). The word "friend" means someone who loves and is loved, someone with whom you share the deepest thoughts of your heart (Jn 15:15b).

The LORD never lost sight of His people, not even when they were scattered. He "has taken them" from everywhere to have them close to Himself and "called" them to a completely different environment (verse 9). In the past century they have come from the most distant countries, such as Russia and China. He wants His people to be His "servant", a people who will serve Him. For the first time in Isaiah, Israel is called "servant". This will happen many times till Isaiah 49:6. This character of Israel as a servant is the result of an act of pure grace and not by any merit on their part.

They have deserved to be "rejected" and thrown away because they have been so unfaithful to the LORD. But precisely because He has "chosen" them, they need not be afraid (verse 10). The coastlands have every reason to be afraid (verse 5), but for God's people there is no reason to be afraid. That is why the LORD says: "Do not fear."

In order to banish any fear, the LORD presents Himself to His people in all His affection for them. He begins with the promise "I am with you", which assures them of His presence and closeness (Mt 28:20). Then He says: "I am your God." Thus they know that He has a relationship with them, that the covenant has been restored. From the New Testament we know that this

will happen through the power of the blood of the new covenant, which is the blood of the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

Finally, He gives a triple assurance of His strength that He uses for them:

1. "I will strengthen you", or "I have strengthened you", in weaknesses, difficulties and opposition and especially in the great tribulation.
2. "Surely I will help you", which means that God will not make Israel strong by sending an angel (cf. Exo 33:2), but by helping Israel Himself (Exo 33:14-17). He helps them to go the right way by giving guidance, direction, and protection.
3. "Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand", shows how the LORD will help Israel. This presupposes His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises. Linked to the Hebrew word for 'right hand' is the thought of strength.

The word "surely" used twice is cumulative, i.e. it connects to the preceding and adds the following certainty, as it is said: 'And not only that, because in addition ...' We therefore should not fail to appropriate the comfort of these rich promises. This comfort will pass us by if we only apply this to Israel. It will also pass us by when we do our work for the Lord in self-satisfaction. A servant of the Lord always needs this comfort when he is aware of his unworthiness and helplessness.

### **Isa 41:11-16 | Israel Exterminates His Enemies**

- 11 *"Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; Those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish.*
- 12 *"You will seek those who quarrel with you, but will not find them, Those who war with you will be as nothing and non-existent.*
- 13 *"For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you.'*
- 14 *"Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you," declares the LORD, "and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.*
- 15 *"Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges; You will thresh the mountains and pulverize [them], And will make the hills like chaff.*

*16 "You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away,  
And the storm will scatter them;  
But you will rejoice in the LORD,  
You will glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

Israel, as the people of God, has always had numerous and powerful enemies. Persecution and opposition will increase and become more intense as the end of time approaches. The just mentioned comforting promises in these verses lead to the certainty of the destruction of the enemies and a repetition of the guarantee of the promised help.

In verses 11-12 four descriptions are given of the enemies, of the way they express themselves to God's people. Two of those expressions are in words (verse 11) and two in deeds (verse 12).

1. They are "all those who are angered at you". This indicates that the fiery heat of satan's opposition is at work in them. But they will be ashamed and dishonored.

2. They are also "those who contend with you",

3. "those who quarrel with you" and

4. "those who war with you". This indicates their active struggle against God's people.

But they are only people, who to the LORD are "as nothing and non-existent". They will perish and will not be found. So radical is their downfall and so complete the deliverance of God's people.

Again the LORD directs the eye of His tried and tested people toward Himself. There is not only the promise of the downfall of the enemy, but the LORD also promises that He will be the support and protection for His people (verse 13). There is not only deliverance, but the LORD will use Israel to fulfill His purpose. To this end He upholds their right hand. Our right hand is the hand with which most of us do the work and symbolizes our activities. The fact that God takes it means that we cannot do anything apart from Him. He wants us to be aware that the strength we need for everything we do must be His strength.

Besides the feeling of the power He gives, He also gives inner peace by banishing fear. Because of His power there need not be any fear of any

opponent. If He helps, who can be a threat? Once again it sounds “do not fear” (verse 14). His people have become so oppressed and depressed, that they hardly dare believe that deliverance is coming.

The LORD speaks to them as the “worm of Jacob”, for that is how they feel. A worm is an example of a helpless creature, thrown to the ground and trampled on, an object of contempt (cf. Job 25:6). It is the larva of the *kirmizi*, an insect with a deep red color. From these larvae crimson is made. To do this, these larvae must be crushed. Crimson is deep red and speaks of sin (Isa 1:18). With this condition of being a worm the Messiah identified Himself in His suffering on the cross, which also means that He is their Savior. He is the worm, He is trampled, yes, He is made sin (Psa 22:6).

The LORD also calls them “men of Israel”. The diminutive “men” indicates that they are vulnerable and mortal and that there is not much left of the people of Israel (this is how the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, translates). This is the result of the great tribulation that has come upon them in which the wicked mass has perished because of its apostasy from the LORD (Deu 4:27). The LORD humbles His people, and also us, that He may exalt them, and us.

For the third time (verses 10,13,14) He says He will help them. The guarantee is that He, the LORD, the God of the covenant, says it. An extra guarantee lies in the fact that their Redeemer is “the Holy One of Israel”. He puts, as it were, His signature on the declaration that He will help them. He points His plagued people to Himself. He is the ever existing, never begun, eternal LORD. Again and again He speaks of this Name as the basis of the certainty of His work of salvation. That work is not at the expense of His holiness. He has fully paid the ransom for salvation and has exclaimed: “It is finished!” (Jn 19:30).

The word “Redeemer” is the translation of the Hebrew word *goel*. Of the thirteen times this word *goel* appears in Isaiah, this is only the first time here. Redemption is always based on His gracious fulfillment of the obligations of a redeemer, who is a blood relative of the one who is to be redeemed (Lev 25:48-49). By participating in flesh and blood and thus becoming related to us, He, the true Redeemer for us and His people, has

been able to bring about redemption with the price of His blood (Heb 2:14-15).

Verses 15-16 vividly describe how the people are used by the LORD to defeat their enemies. Like a “new, sharp threshing sledge” they will pulverize proud and mighty enemies, “mountains” and “hills”, into chaff taken up by the wind and blown away. A threshing sledge is similar to coarse sandpaper, but than a wooden board instead of paper and sharp stones instead of the sandpaper granules. The fact that it is “a new” threshing sledge means that the stones have not yet been dulled by wear and tear.

“The wind” and “the storm” of the LORD will blow the chaff, the remainders of the enemy, completely away. Then His people will not boast of their own deeds, but rejoice in the LORD, Who will then return to His people as Redeemer. Then all obstacles will be removed. Then they will rejoice in Him, for to Him alone they owe all their blessings.

#### **Isa 41:17-20 | Promise of Blessing**

*17 “The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none,  
And their tongue is parched with thirst;  
I, the LORD, will answer them Myself,  
[As] the God of Israel I will not forsake them.*

*18 “I will open rivers on the bare heights  
And springs in the midst of the valleys;  
I will make the wilderness a pool of water  
And the dry land fountains of water.*

*19 “I will put the cedar in the wilderness,  
The acacia and the myrtle and the olive tree;  
I will place the juniper in the desert  
Together with the box tree and the cypress,*

*20 That they may see and recognize,  
And consider and gain insight as well,  
That the hand of the LORD has done this,  
And the Holy One of Israel has created it.*

The LORD, Who knows the future, thinks with pity of the wretched and poor of His people who will go through great distress, represented by an

extreme drought (verse 17). The thirst here is a picture of yearning for the LORD (cf. Psa 42:2). He then thinks not only of all who will come from Babylon, but of all of His people who will meet with loss and suffering at all times. Above all He thinks of the faithful remnant in the great tribulation. The LORD promises them that He will answer them and will not forsake them. He will refresh them abundantly by making provisions in a way only He can work (verse 18; Isa 12:3; 55:1).

Although all of this describes the literal change from the homeless condition of Israel to the abundant blessing they will receive in the realm of peace (cf. Isa 35:6-7), these promises also have a spiritual meaning. There is a clear reference to the water that was supernaturally provided for during the journey of God's people in the wilderness after the deliverance out of Egypt. A spiritual meaning is attributed to it (1Cor 10:4; cf. Jn 4:14; 7:37-39; Rev 22:17).

Verse 19 continues to describe figuratively the multiple provisions of refreshment and comfort for the people in the coming day. This fullness is indicated by mentioning seven species of trees which the LORD promises to plant in the wilderness, which will turn into a true paradise. All these trees are sustainable and have a pleasant scent. That too is a picture of the continual enjoyment of the fellowship that the Spirit works and of the pleasant scent thereof.

This abundance of blessing, represented in these seven trees, is not the result of human planting. When this situation comes, all those who will enjoy it will be fourfold aware that it is all the result of the action of "the hand of the LORD" and of His creative power (verse 20).

In that fourfold way, "see and recognize, and consider and gain insight", there is an ascent. This ascension also describes what the result should be as we ponder Scripture and reflect on God's actions with us. It should lead us to see the Creator of that blessing behind all the blessing that comes from God's creative hand. The point is that the gift leads us to admire the Giver and that we do not dwell on the gift.

### **Isa 41:21-24 | The LORD Challenges the Idols**

| 21 *"Present your case," the LORD says.*

*"Bring forward your strong [arguments],"*

*The King of Jacob says.*

*22 Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place;*

*As for the former [events], declare what they [were],*

*That we may consider them and know their outcome.*

*Or announce to us what is coming;*

*23 Declare the things that are going to come afterward,*

*That we may know that you are gods;*

*Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously  
look about us and fear together.*

*24 Behold, you are of no account,*

*And your work amounts to nothing;*

*He who chooses you is an abomination.*

At the beginning of this chapter the LORD declares the fact of His Godhead in exercising His absolute power to arouse a ruler who subdues nations and that He controls the rise and course of generations. Now He declares His Godhead by stating that He alone knows and can foretell the future. Earlier He challenged the idolaters, now He challenges the idols themselves, the gods of the nations.

The LORD and His people – for He is “the King of Jacob” – stand on one side and the idolatrous heathens stand on the other side (verse 21). Let their gods come forward and prove to them that they are gods if they can. Then let them declare “to us” – that is the LORD Who as King represents His people and connects them with Himself – what the future looks like (verse 22). This concerns both the near future, “what is going to take place”, and the distant future, “what is coming”.

Let them at least do something, whether “good or evil,” so that they at least give some sign of life (verse 23; cf. 1Kgs 18:27). Then, says the LORD, we will at least have a foothold, a face that we can imagine, something we can measure ourselves against and possibly even fear. Then let the idols speak now to prove their deity! That does not happen, of course, because they cannot do it. Hence the destructive judgment on them and their creators (verse 24).



**Isa 41:25-29 | The LORD Foretells Future Things**

25 *"I have aroused one from the north, and he has come;  
 From the rising of the sun he will call on My name;  
 And he will come upon rulers as [upon] mortar,  
 Even as the potter treads clay."*  
 26 *Who has declared [this] from the beginning, that we might know?  
 Or from former times, that we may say, "[He is] right!"?  
 Surely there was no one who declared,  
 Surely there was no one who proclaimed,  
 Surely there was no one who heard your words.*  
 27 *"Formerly [I said] to Zion, 'Behold, here they are.'  
 And to Jerusalem, 'I will give a messenger of good news.'"*  
 28 *"But when I look, there is no one,  
 And there is no counselor among them  
 Who, if I ask, can give an answer.*  
 29 *"Behold, all of them are false;  
 Their works are worthless,  
 Their molten images are wind and emptiness.*

Again the LORD makes clear that power and authority belong to Him alone in the exaltation in which He disposes of national and international affairs. That is why He repeats the prophecy about Cyrus (verse 25). He has aroused him "from the north, and he has come". In this way the LORD shows again His omniscience and continues His challenge of the idols. The "north" is Media (verse 2). No one else can do it, none of the heathen deities has revealed it (verse 26). No one has heard about it from them. They have not expressed themselves.

There is no answer to the challenge of the LORD. Had there been an answer, their divine power would have been recognized. But the LORD speaks! As the Only One, He formerly addressed the word to Zion (verse 27). They are the first to receive the promise of blessing. All others can only repeat what He has already said. They cannot say anything new that He would not know.

With a clear delight in the lasting good for His people, He promises to give Jerusalem a messenger of good news. The "messenger of good news" is

also the LORD Himself. With the words “behold, here they are” He calls upon Zion to see how He has fulfilled His promises, looking to the future time of fulfillment.

Verse 28 gives the expected outcome of the lawsuit. The idols and their worshipers are silent. There is no counselor to say a word. The case concludes with an explanation of the contempt and anger of the LORD (verse 29), which literally reads: “Behold them all! Nullity! Their product is nothing; wind and desolation are their molten images.” This is the deathblow for idolatry. The faithful remnant is now convinced of the foolishness of idolatry, which will reappear in the future during the great tribulation in the most penetrating way (Rev 13:14-15).

## Isaiah 42

### Introduction

In Isaiah 40-41 it is about the greatness and majesty of the LORD God, but also about His mercy to redeem Israel. The question that remains is: How will God fulfill His promise of salvation? God's answer is not primarily *how* it happens, but *through Whom* He will fulfill His promises. The answer is found in this chapter, in the first great prophecy and revelation in this part of the book regarding Jesus Christ. All promises of restoration and the blessing that follows find their center in Him (2Cor 1:20). Later on the question will be answered how He is going to do it: through His sacrificial death (Isa 53:1-12).

Now we see the joy of God the Father in Him and what remarkable things will be accomplished by Him. The light of the glory of His Person puts Cyrus in the shadow here, although more will be said about him later. Here comes Christ before us as the One Who blesses Israel and as the Savior of the nations.

### Isa 42:1-4 | The Chosen Servant

1 *"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;  
My chosen one [in whom] My soul delights.  
I have put My Spirit upon Him;  
He will bring forth justice to the nations.*  
2 *"He will not cry out or raise [His voice],  
Nor make His voice heard in the street.*  
3 *"A bruised reed He will not break  
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;  
He will faithfully bring forth justice.*  
4 *"He will not be disheartened or crushed  
Until He has established justice in the earth;  
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."*

First the LORD speaks about the Servant to His people (verses 1-4); then He speaks to the Servant about His task (verses 5-7); finally He speaks again to the people as a final conclusion (verses 8-9).

After the word “behold” as a call to look at the idols in their vanity in the last verse of the previous chapter (Isa 41:29), here follows “behold” look at Him Whom the LORD has chosen (verse 1). From Israel, the failing servant of the LORD, our gaze is now turned toward the faithful and true Servant of the LORD, the Lord Jesus.

Christ is called “My Servant” by the LORD. Even the people know, when the Lord Jesus has come, that the Chosen One of God is Christ Himself (Lk 23:35) and not Israel – as many Jews today claim. By the way, the call “behold” is meant to introduce Him, to draw attention to Him, while Israel has been mentioned before (Isa 41:8) and therefore does not need to be introduced. The LORD calls upon His people to look at Him.

This first prophecy about ‘the Servant of the LORD’ begins by expressing the delight that God the Father has in Him. We get a glimpse into His life and what characterizes Him during His days in the flesh. We come into contact with His tenderness and also with His power and the great deliverance He will work. “Whom I uphold” indicates the trust God has in Him that He will accomplish His service. We uphold someone in whom we have confidence. Upholding means connecting yourself with someone’s destiny and giving him help and strength.

In the quotation of this verse in Matthew 12, instead of “My Chosen One,” He is called “My Beloved” (Mt 12:18), which reflects the other meaning of the Hebrew word. That meaning fits with the Father’s earlier statement in the Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 3:17). He is the Chosen One in the counsel of the Father.

The work to be done by the Servant cannot be done by anyone else. The delight is expressed in the Spirit Whom the Father puts upon Him. Delight already is there before the Father pronounces it at His baptism and on that occasion gives His Spirit (cf. Isa 61:1; Pro 8:30). The word “delight” is also a word that is often connected with the “soothing aroma” of the sacrifices in the book of Leviticus (Lev 1:9,13,17) and is therefore also a reference to the character of the work that the Servant will do.

Here in Isaiah we see the triune God. Christ takes on the character of Servant in order to fulfill the will of the Father, which He does in the power of the Holy Spirit Who is put upon Him by the Father at His baptism. The declaration "I have put My Spirit upon Him", is the center of three great declarations concerning the Holy Spirit in Isaiah in connection with Christ. The first speaks of His incarnation (Isa 11:2). The second, here, points to His baptism. The third refers to the beginning of His public performance (Isa 61:1).

The last part of verse 1, "He will bring forth justice to the nations", suddenly leaps forward to the future, to His second coming and the millennial realm of peace, for that is not fulfilled during His life on earth. Through the gospel, His "justice" in the present time is revealed as a blessing. In the future it will happen in judgment as well as in the kingdom of peace afterward. How this will be fulfilled has been described in detail by the prophet earlier (Isa 2:1-4).

Yet even during His life on earth He brings forth justice, the right of God, to the nations. He has done so both in judgment and in grace for all who have bowed under this judgment. An example of the latter is the Syrophoenician woman (Mt 15:24-28).

When He is on earth, "in the days of His flesh" (Heb 5:7), He does not draw attention to Himself (verse 2; Mt 24:5,23). People often do so in the three stages of voice raising, called "cry out," "raise the voice" and "make the voice heard". Conversely, His performance is quiet, friendly, and humble. The healed crippled at the bathwater of Bethesda does not know where He is (Jn 5:13), nor does the blind born (Jn 9:12). Several times He says to those who have experienced His goodness that they should not make Him known.

He acts in perfection according to the word that charity should not be done "before men to be noticed by them" (Mt 6:1-4). He does it for His Father. Is this also the mind of our hearts and the quality of our work? What He brings is sufficient and does not need to be confirmed by a flashy performance or a trumpeting ahead of Him. The Lord did *teach* in the streets (Lk 13:26).

"He will not cry out," seems to contradict verse 13, "He will utter a shout", but in both verses a different word for shouting is used. The first word has to do with His people, the second with His enemies. The first indicates His kindness and tenderness, the absence of a self-centered noisy demonstration. He does not impose himself. Nor has he come to unleash a revolution against the Romans. The second is His voice as Conqueror, causing the enemies of God to perish at the end of the age.

Then in verses 3-4 a series of promises, again in chiastic or reverse order (a,b,b,a; see at Isaiah 40:21): There is

- a. "a bruised reed" (verse 3) that He will not break.
- b. "a dimly burning wick" that He will not extinguish (verse 4)
- b. "not disheartened", followed by
- a. "not ... crushed", in the sense of not being discouraged.

He will not break "the bruised reed", and He Himself "will not be crushed" (a + a), for He is in Himself the strong One Who cares of the bruised and crushed. He will not "extinguish" the dimly burning wick, which is the almost extinguished wick, and He Himself will not "extinguish" or "disheartened" (b + b), for He is in Himself the full light that brings light where it is almost extinguished. Thus He will ensure that His tested ones will share in His glory.

We see here His loving care for us now and that should encourage us. If we sometimes feel like bruised reed, only fit to be broken off completely, or we feel that our light is burning so poorly, let us think of His desires for us. We may go to Him to be renewed in grace and receive restoration of strength from Him.

There is nothing of value in bruised reed. It is reminiscent of the broken heart, trampled by rough treatment. Without any resistance it is thrown away. The bruised reed is a picture of humility (Isa 58:5). A reed can be used as a staff, but a once bruised reed can no longer be used; on the contrary, it can injure you (Isa 36:6). Normally you would throw away such a reed, but the Servant does it otherwise.

The bruised reed is the epitome of weakness in a world where there is only room for those who are strong. Also in the church it is considered as nothing. But the Lord is able to turn this bruised reed into a musical pipe or a

yardstick for the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:15). He has come for those who are brokenhearted (Isa 61:1). He does not impose an iron rod on them, but extends to them the golden scepter of His grace (Est 5:2). He Himself is broken or crushed (Isa 53:5,10; Gen 3:15).

The dimly burning or extinguishing wick hardly gives any light and warmth and is also no longer able to light someone else. It speaks of a small spark of faith found in the heart of a human who exclaims: "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mk 9:24). Often love burns so weakly in our hearts that only He Who knows all things also knows that there is still a glimmer of love present (Jn 21:15-17). Thus, in seven weeks, He can change Peter from an almost extinguished wick to a flame that sets three thousand souls on fire on Pentecost (Acts 2:14,37-41).

Because He will not be bruised and extinguished, He will bring justice to earth. He will not nullify the law by compromise, but will execute it in faithfulness and according to the truth. He will see to it that by teaching the law the law is made known and upheld. In doing so, He is fulfilling the desire that there is for this teaching. Then the question: "Where is the God of justice?" (Mal 2:17) will be answered definitively.

Justice will be established in the earth at the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth (Psa 72:1-2). The Lord Jesus is waiting for the hour of His Father. When satan offers Him the kingdoms of this world, He does not want to receive them (Mt 4:8-10). The day will come when the promise of the Father will be fulfilled and He says to Him: "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the [very] ends of the earth as Your possession" (Psa 2:8).

### **Isa 42:5-7 | The Servant Called and His Work**

*5 Thus says God the LORD,  
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
Who spread out the earth and its offspring,  
Who gives breath to the people on it  
And spirit to those who walk in it,  
6 "I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness,  
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,*

*And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,  
As a light to the nations,  
7 To open blind eyes,  
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon  
And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.*

After the LORD has called the hearers to behold His Servant, He addresses Himself to His Servant in verse 6. As an introduction He describes His omnipotence (verse 5). He speaks of Himself as “God the LORD”, Names expressing that He is the Almighty and the Eternal. He declares that He is the Creator of heaven and earth and all that the earth produces. He is also the Giver of life and spirit to mankind. With this the LORD points out to His Servant the power He has to support Him. It sounds like the “all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” with which the Lord Jesus encourages His disciples in His commission to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-19).

This great presentation is the basis of what follows. This great Person has called His Servant (verse 6). It is a calling “in righteousness”, that is to say, a calling that meets all the righteous demands of God and which a person must meet in order to fulfill that calling (cf. Mt 3:15).

At the same time the LORD promises that He will help and watch over Him in the fulfillment of the task to which He has called. The holding of His hand points to His nearness, His favor and affection for Him, His counsel and guidance, and the strength that the Servant receives from Him as Man to do His work. Watching over Him means that He will protect His servant against attacks until it is the time when He is handed over to His enemies.

The Servant has been made “as a covenant to the people”, that is Israel. This shows that a Person other than Israel is the Servant (cf. Isa 41:8-9). In Him all that the LORD has promised His people and to which He has committed Himself by a covenant will be fulfilled. He has also been made “a light to the nations”. The nations will also be blessed by Him. Here we see that this means much more than the restoration of Israel from exile. The Servant comes to bring light and salvation to the nations.



The blessed effect of the position which the LORD has given Him will be realized in the realm of peace by the Lord Jesus, the Servant of the LORD. He will open blind eyes and give freedom and light (verse 7); for Israel, as we see further on (verse 18), is a deaf and blind servant of the LORD. The opening of the eyes of the blind is the testimony that the Lord Jesus has given to John the baptist when he asks if He is the Messiah (Mt 11:4-5a).

Never in the Old Testament have the eyes of the physically blind been opened. One of the characteristic signs of the Messiah is the opening of the eyes of the blind. The spiritual meaning of opening the eyes of the blind is to teach the ignorant and make them acquainted with God and the way of salvation (Acts 26:18).

We may secondarily apply these things to ourselves as servants of God, as the Lord Jesus shows to Paul by quoting this verse in relation to his service (Acts 26:16-18). He Who has called us will hold our hand and protect us and make us servants of His gospel. He will enable us to bring light and freedom to those who are in spiritual darkness and captivity of sin.

### **Isa 42:8-9 | Only the LORD Can Predict New Things**

*8 "I am the LORD, that is My name;  
I will not give My glory to another,  
Nor My praise to graven images.  
9 "Behold, the former things have come to pass,  
Now I declare new things;  
Before they spring forth I proclaim [them] to you."*

"LORD" (verse 8) is the Name by which He revealed Himself to Moses as a guarantee that He will fulfill His word with respect to His mission (Exo 3:14-15). That Name is also the guarantee for the redemption of His people (Exo 6:2-6). His Name is the guarantee of the fulfillment of His Word. He does not give His honor to the idols of the nations and cannot share it with anyone. The Lord Jesus gets this honor (Phil 2:9), because He is the LORD.

The proclamation of His Name is followed by the authoritative assurance that He gives His glory and praise to no one and nothing else. It is an affirmation of the meaning of His Name. His 'glory' is the revelation of His nature, features and power. The revelation of His glory provokes the praise

of those to whom that revelation is given. Glory and praise belong together and they belong to no one but God. All idolaters should know this.

The twofold statement of verse 9 must also be seen against the background of the contrast with the idols. The first statement is about “the former things”. What God has prophesied would happen at the time indicated, has happened exactly as was prophesied. Also “new things” have been announced (Isa 42:1-7) that have not yet been fulfilled, but will be fulfilled in their time as well. The LORD makes everything known in advance. No other god can do that.

### **Isa 42:10-12 | Call to Praise the LORD**

*10 Sing to the LORD a new song,  
[Sing] His praise from the end of the earth!  
You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it.  
You islands, and those who dwell on them.  
11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up [their voices],  
The settlements where Kedar inhabits.  
Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud,  
Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains.  
12 Let them give glory to the LORD  
And declare His praise in the coastlands.*

Verses 10-17 apply to the realm of peace. This section contains some of the ‘new things’ of verse 9. For example, after the redemption is mentioned (verse 9) there is “a new song” (verse 10). It is the song of praise that the nations will sing that used to be in spiritual darkness. The first song of the Bible, the song of Moses (Exo 15:1), is sung by a redeemed people. The same goes for the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15:3). This also applies here in verses 10-12. The verb ‘singing’ is never used for angels. Singing is reserved for redeemed people.

It is a general call that sounds all over the earth. The call begins with those who are furthest away, the sailors; it continues to those who live in the neighborhood, the Arabs in the wilderness; and it ends with the Jewish people who live in the high mountains.

Verse 11 speaks about Kedar. That is the name of the second son of Ishmael (Gen 25:13). In this name the Arabs are introduced. It is the collective name for the Arabian tribes (Isa 21:13-17; Eze 27:21). "The inhabitants of Sela" is also translated as "those who live in the rocks". Sela is a place where the Edomites lived. The wilderness in question here is that of Arabia. In the future, the Arabs will no longer follow the false prophet Muhammad, but give glory to the LORD and proclaim His praise to the extreme of the earth (verse 12).

### **Isa 42:13-17 | The LORD Goes Forth**

13 *The LORD will go forth like a warrior,  
He will arouse [His] zeal like a man of war.  
He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry.  
He will prevail against His enemies.*

14 *"I have kept silent for a long time,  
I have kept still and restrained Myself.  
[Now] like a woman in labor I will groan,  
I will both gasp and pant.*

15 *"I will lay waste the mountains and hills  
And wither all their vegetation;  
I will make the rivers into coastlands  
And dry up the ponds.*

16 *"I will lead the blind by a way they do not know,  
In paths they do not know I will guide them.  
I will make darkness into light before them  
And rugged places into plains.  
These are the things I will do,  
And I will not leave them undone."*

17 *They will be turned back [and] be utterly put to shame,  
Who trust in idols,  
Who say to molten images,  
"You are our gods."*

The LORD will destroy the king of the North (Dan 11:45) – and thus the dominion of islam – as well as the false prophet of His people, the anti-christ, together with the ten kings and the beast that reigns over them. To

this end He will go forth like a warrior (verse 13). When His zeal arouses and He utters the battle cry (cf. Joel 3:16; Jer 25:30), the enemies no longer have any chance.

He held back for a long time (verse 14) and did not openly intervene to deliver His oppressed people, be they Israel or the church. This indicates His longsuffering which is so characteristic of the present day in which He has the gospel of His grace proclaimed despite all opposition and slander and apostasy (2Pet 3:9).

This present time is coming to an end. God's silence is not endless. He will utter a shout. It is as if all the restrained anger about the ungodliness of the world and everything that has been done to His people comes out. With the heat of His wrath, He will lay waste "the mountains and hills" as a picture of the hostile powers, and "all their vegetation" as a picture of their prosperity and their works (verse 15). All sources of blessing will dry up, every refreshment will come to an end.

On the other hand, He will show mercy to His people. He will open the eyes of those blinded by sin to their need and make them see His salvation (verse 16). He will lead them out of misery and bring them on a path of light and blessing, on His own path of righteousness and peace. He will make darkness into light before them. He will free the road from obstacles and make it plain and passable.

In the first place this refers to the redemption from the Babylonian exile and the road by which they are led back to Jerusalem from Babylon (cf. Isa 43:19). The people need to understand that it is not Cyrus, but the LORD Who redeems them. Cyrus is but an instrument in His hand. Even more so, in the end time the LORD will act like this for the benefit of His people. Also the description of His actions here is so general, that we can apply it to the whole redeeming work of the Lord Jesus – He is the LORD – that He has done for His heavenly people, the church.

The LORD underlines His words with a solemn double declaration, one in a positive and one in a negative sense, in which both declarations reinforce each other: He will do and will not leave them undone. In this way every doubt is excluded.

This action of the LORD also has a consequence for the idolaters (verse 17). When they see what He has done for those who put their trust in Him, they will recoil in terror and the red of shame will come upon their jaws. The foolishness of their idolatry and the uselessness of their idols will be highlighted.

### Isa 42:18-19 | Deaf and Blind

*18 Hear, you deaf!*

*And look, you blind, that you may see.*

*19 Who is blind but My servant,*

*Or so deaf as My messenger whom I send?*

*Who is so blind as he that is at peace [with Me],*

*Or so blind as the servant of the LORD?*

In verse 7 we see that the servant of the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. Here in verse 18 we see that the deaf hear and the blind see through the work of the Servant of the LORD. But then verse 19 says that the servant of the LORD is blind and deaf. It is clear that in the book of Isaiah there are two servants. There is a servant who is blind and deaf (Isa 6:10) and who must first be healed before he can be used by the LORD. That servant is Israel (Isa 43:10). There is also another Servant. That is none other than Christ, in Whom God has found all His delight.

These verses contain a powerful and instructive message for us who have been called into His service by grace. Much comes toward us that can darken our view of the Lord and make us deaf to His voice. These are all things to which our flesh is all too inclined to respond. We are tempted in countless ways to forget that we are on earth to simply do the will of Him Who has called and sent us. Doing our own will only results in sorrow for our hearts.

### Isa 42:20-22 | Seeing Blind and Hearing Deaf

*20 You have seen many things, but you do not observe [them];*

*[Your] ears are open, but none hears.*

*21 The LORD was pleased for His righteousness' sake*

*To make the law great and glorious.*

*22 But this is a people plundered and despoiled;  
All of them are trapped in caves,  
Or are hidden away in prisons;  
They have become a prey with none to deliver [them],  
And a spoil, with none to say, "Give [them] back!"*

In verse 20 the reproach of the blindness and deafness of the people is further explained. They do see a lot, but the real content passes them by because they do not observe it. Literally it says that they do not 'keep' it or 'guard' it. The expressions 'keep' – Hebrew *samar* – and 'listen' – Hebrew *sama* – are characteristic of the book of Deuteronomy in connection with God's law (Deu 28:15; 29:2-4; cf. Isa 6:9-10).

They do open their ears, but what they hear doesn't penetrate them. That is because their heart has become fat; it is not directed toward the LORD, and they only pursue their own interests. They do not want to walk in His ways and do not obey His law. Yet it has been His purpose to show them His glory from His Word, the law (verse 21).

It is His joy to make the law "great and glorious". This can also be translated as "giving a great, glorious teaching". This is the law, but not in the limited sense of the Ten Commandments, but in all the glorious statements revealed by a God Who, with His law, His teachings, has the blessing of His people in mind. His righteousness desires it, but their iniquity has made it impossible.

God's proposal has found its full fulfillment in the perfect life of the Lord Jesus on earth. We see that it is His delight to do God's will. God's law is within His heart and defines His whole life (Psa 40:8), which is characterized by perfect obedience from beginning to end (Phil 2:8). The LORD has made the law great and glorious in the Person of His Son, both in His life and in His death. With Him we see in everything the glory of the law in contrast with the ways of the people to whom the law has been given.

The people are in a state of hardening. Instead of glorifying God by teaching the law to the nations around them, they have ignored God's law, His 'glorious teaching'. As a result, they are delivered into the hands of the nations. They are a people who have been "plundered and despoiled" (verse

22). It is also a people trapped in caves and hidden away in prisons. There is no more freedom of movement. They need redemption themselves.

This is also the case spiritually when a believer starts to live outside the will and the way of God. Then spiritual powers will rob such a person of all Christian values and make him a slave to sin and a dishonor of God.

### Isa 42:23-25 | Penetrating Questions

*23 Who among you will give ear to this?  
Who will give heed and listen hereafter?  
24 Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to plunderers?  
Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned,  
And in whose ways they were not willing to walk,  
And whose law they did not obey?  
25 So He poured out on him the heat of His anger  
And the fierceness of battle;  
And it set him aflame all around,  
Yet he did not recognize [it];  
And it burned him, but he paid no attention.*

With verse 23 begins the last part of this chapter, in which a last series of penetrating questions is asked. These questions are related to what preceded and are directly related to the miserable state in which the people find themselves. The question here is why a people destined to be a servant of the LORD, to whom the law, the teaching of God, has been entrusted, is not able to fulfill this task, but on the contrary, needs salvation themselves. Who of them will take this lesson, this question, to heart?

The suffering inflicted on them by the nations will become even greater. Only a remnant will listen in the future. "Hereafter" refers to the future. It is a call to be concerned with the future. The consequences for practical life will not fail. Only the remnant will recognize that the suffering that has come upon the people has been worked by the LORD (verse 24).

They will recognize that the exile is the result of their own sins. The first exile is the one to Babylon. There they have been for seventy years because they did not keep the law and committed idolatry. The other exile is the one to every corner of the earth for a period that has lasted for about two

thousand years now. Why is that? It is because of the rejection of the Lord Jesus (cf. Gen 42:21).

Because the wicked mass of the people will not listen, even more intense plagues will strike them (verse 25). Even worse than the chastisement itself is the failure to recognize that the LORD brings this upon them. These things are written to teach us to recognize that the Lord's chastening hand in our lives is governed by His gracious purpose, wisdom, and love.



## Isaiah 43

### **Isa 43:1-7 | The Loving God**

*1 But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob,  
And He who formed you, O Israel,  
"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name; you are Mine!*

*2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.  
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,  
Nor will the flame burn you.*

*3 "For I am the LORD your God,  
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;  
I have given Egypt as your ransom,  
Cush and Seba in your place.*

*4 "Since you are precious in My sight,  
[Since] you are honored and I love you,  
I will give [other] men in your place and [other]  
peoples in exchange for your life.*

*5 "Do not fear, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
And gather you from the west.*

*6 "I will say to the north, 'Give [them] up!'  
And to the south, 'Do not hold [them] back.'  
Bring My sons from afar  
And My daughters from the ends of the earth,*

*7 Everyone who is called by My name,  
And whom I have created for My glory,  
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."*

With the words "but now" the LORD suddenly passes from judgment to comfort (verse 1). This expression is typical for Isaiah, he uses it fifteen times, and also for Jeremiah, who uses it twelve times. The LORD leaves His complaint about the blinded, hardened and unrepentant state of Israel

to unfold His actions in connection with His covenant in the past, present and future. In this and the following verses, the Divine “I” appears about thirty-five times, which places a strong emphasis on the personal actions of God.

These actions are all based on His creative power and His redeeming grace. For us who stand in the fulfillment of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and service to us through His Holy Spirit, God’s irrevocable assurances and promises in this section are doubly precious.

The action of God is represented in verses 1-7 in a chiastic manner. Chiasm is a Hebrew poetic form that gives a symmetrical mirror image with emphasis on the middle part. The chiastic structure in these verses is as follows:

a. Verse 1

---b. Verse 2

-----c. Verse 3

-----c. Verse 4

---b. Verses 5-6

a. Verse 7

a. The first and the last part of this poem, verse 1 and verse 7 (2 x a.), make it clear that Israel will experience His grace because of their special bond with God. He is their Creator and will therefore never forsake them.

b. Verse 2 and the parallel verses 5-6 (2 x b.) give the encouragement to know that no power will ever be able to destroy the chosen people.

c. Finally, verse 3 and verse 4 (2 x c.) make it clear as a center point how precious Israel is to God. God will always pay the ransom necessary to redeem His people. What an encouragement!

The change from righteous indignation to loving comfort and comforting promises and assurances is extraordinarily meaningful. It shows that restoration cannot be achieved by any meritorious effort on the part of the wandering people. Their terrible need can only be met by Divine grace.

The love of God is not sentimental. His love is never exercised at the expense of His holiness and never compromises His righteousness. The love

that chastens is of earlier date than the chastening. He loves His people before they go astray, making His chastening necessary.

In His love the LORD created them. The expressions used here take us back to creation (Gen 1:1; 2:4-7). This makes it clear that the same God Who created heaven and earth also formed the people of Israel. That same God now wants to show His mercy. The creation of Israel is a supernatural act in response to purposed counsel. He also formed them in His love.

This is a supernatural process which He had also purposed and of which He testifies in His actions with the patriarchs and the descendants of Jacob. In His love He also redeemed them. Again and again He has reminded the people that nothing but His direct power has redeemed them from Egypt. Finally, in His love He called them by their name.

The calling by name has in Scripture the thought of tenderness rejoicing in the possession of the called one. Thus He has called His own sheep by name and has led them (Jn 10:3). Creation, redemption and calling are also our part. We are created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10), redeemed by His blood (Eph 1:7) and called by His grace (Gal 1:15). The encouragement "do not fear" is based on the evidence of God's mercy in the past.

The LORD promises them His presence as they pass through the waters and rivers, reminding them of their going through the waters of the Red Sea and through the Jordan (verse 2). He then assures them that He will be with them as they walk through the fire of the exile (Isa 42:25) and the great tribulation (cf. Dan 3:25; Psa 66:12).

In this context, water speaks for us of dangers arising from circumstances of daily life, trials of faith in the ordinary things of life. Fire speaks of persecution. Both forms can occur in the life of the believer. These are obstacles we encounter on our path to block our way, but through which the Lord helps us.

It is God's purpose to banish fear from our hearts and to strengthen our faith through all that is contained in the assurance: "For I am the LORD your God" (verse 3). These names speak of His majesty and the greatness of His infinite Being and His omnipotent power. He is their Savior. But when He saves them, He also does so as "the Holy One of Israel". He

never acts contrary to His holiness and righteousness; on the contrary, His actions result from it.

For the redemption of His people He pays with other nations. When Cyrus lets His people go, He gives him other nations in their place. "The wicked is a ransom for the righteous" (Pro 21:18). For this Israel must first stand righteously before God. How God works that, we see in the following chapters. He will never owe anyone anything. He acts in this way for the benefit of His people because these people are precious in His eyes (verse 4). He holds it in high esteem and loves it above other nations. The language used here is that of a bridegroom to his bride.

What the LORD does is an act of pure grace, for the people have not deserved it. They are no better in themselves than other nations. We may think of ourselves in the same way. We are "justified" and "made pleasant" before God. This we are not in ourselves, but "in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6b). The Father loves us as He loves the Son (Jn 17:23).

Verses 5-6 indicate that the LORD will gather His people from all over the world and bring them into His land. This will happen in the end time. He commands the nations north and south of Israel to bring them, whom He calls "My sons" and "My daughters", back to His land from the outermost places. As a reason for this action, He repeats the comforting message of verse 1.

He identifies Himself with them by speaking of them as "everyone who is called by My name" (verse 7). It refers both to identification in character with Him Himself and to possession of Him in order to show His glory and grace. They are His possession to radiate His honor.

He "created" them in an act of power by which He originated them as a people. That He has "formed" them, refers to the process of His grace to change what He has created so that it reflects His glory. He has also "made" them into what they are, which indicates the completion of His Divine work. In these three acts there is a climax: creating, forming, completing.

These three aspects also apply to us Christians. They express the wonders of God's counsel and power and the riches of His grace. He created us in

Christ, He changes us through the active power of the Holy Spirit and will complete us at the coming of the Lord.

### Isa 43:8-13 | No One Can Be Compared to God

*8 Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes,  
And the deaf, even though they have ears.*

*9 All the nations have gathered together  
So that the peoples may be assembled.*

*Who among them can declare this  
And proclaim to us the former things?*

*Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified,  
Or let them hear and say, "It is true."*

*10 "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD,  
"And My servant whom I have chosen,  
So that you may know and believe Me  
And understand that I am He.*

*Before Me there was no God formed,  
And there will be none after Me.*

*11 "I, even I, am the LORD,  
And there is no savior besides Me.*

*12 "It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed,  
And there was no strange [god] among you;  
So you are My witnesses," declares the LORD,  
"And I am God.*

*13 "Even from eternity I am He,  
And there is none who can deliver out of My hand;  
I act and who can reverse it?"*

The command in verse 8 is not given to bring Israel back from exile. This is the case in verse 5. Here it is a general command to the nations to let His people go. The people are then no longer blind and deaf (cf. Isa 42:18).

The nations have gathered together in court session (verse 9). Before they can enjoy the riches of the realm of peace, they must be brought to the acknowledgment of the facts concerning the true God, in contrast to their idols and superstition. The challenge is for the nations to bring their witnesses forward, so that they may be justified. Of course there are no such

witnesses. The only alternative is the acknowledgment, “it is true”, that there is only one true and living God.

In verse 10 the LORD declares that the people of Israel are His “witnesses” (cf. Isa 44:8). The people have always been His witnesses concerning the existence of the LORD, but when they are restored, they will be both witnesses and servants. They testify of the uninitiated and independently existing nature of His Being. “That I am He” is the declaration that He is God exclusive and eternal in the past and the future.

We also see here the wonder that a blind and deaf servant can be called as a witness in this heavenly courtroom. This is an indication that God is going to perform a wonder on this servant. This wonder has happened on us through which the Lord says to us, “you shall be My witnesses” (Acts 1:8).

Because His Being has no beginning and no end, the thought of another being apart from Him with characteristics of a deity is a contradiction in itself. How empty and useless are the attempts of the nations to show that the objects of their worship are true gods. And not only that, but how utterly doomed to failure will be the attempt of the man of sin to force the nations under him to worship him as God (2Thes 2:3). The judgment on this blasphemous arrogance will be executed by the Son of God Himself (2Thes 2:8).

The second statement that His earthly people are His witnesses is connected with the facts that He alone is the Savior and that no one can save from His hand (verses 11-13). The facts of the creation of Israel and that Israel still exists is proof and testimony of the fact that the God of Israel is the only God.

He is not only the Eternal One, but He is also the Almighty. Not only can no one prevent Him from establishing anything, but neither can anyone change what He has established. If this is true with respect to His earthly, national witnesses, let us draw courage and new strength from this as those He has called to be His witnesses through the gospel.

### **Isa 43:14-15 | The Instrument of Redemption**

*14 Thus says the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,  
“For your sake I have sent to Babylon,*

*And will bring them all down as fugitives,  
Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice.  
15 "I am the LORD, your Holy One,  
The Creator of Israel, your King."*

With verse 14 begins a new section that extends to Isaiah 44:5. In this section the LORD shows the nations that He is the Redeemer of Israel. This not only refers to His work of redemption in the past (verse 18), but He also announces a new work of redemption (verse 19). The subjects in this new section are judgment (Isa 43:14-21), salvation (Isa 43:22-28) and the outpouring of the Spirit (Isa 44:1-5).

The first part is about the exercise of the anger of God over the Chaldeans they have deserved because of their mistreatment of God's people. "For your sake", that is, for the purpose of redeeming His people, He has sent someone to Babylon as the executor of His judgment. That turns out to be Cyrus. The action of this Cyrus will have the effect that their war fleet of which they cheer and of which they are proud, will be relegated to a flight fleet.

In view of their deliverance, God gives a fourfold remembrance of His people of Who He is (verse 15):

1. As the "LORD" He is the God of the covenant.
2. As "your Holy One" He contrasts with their unholy abandonment of Him and the unholy character of their heathen rulers. His Name is desecrated through exile, but that Name will be sanctified again through the redemption of Israel (Eze 36:20-24).
3. As "the Creator of Israel" He created them for His glory and will never allow them to be definitively rejected.
4. As "your King" He will reign as a blessing for His people, unlike the always failing kings of Israel and Judah and the peoples of whom they have become slaves, and especially unlike the antichrist, the false king of Israel.

### **Isa 43:16-21 | A Way for God's People**

*16 Thus says the LORD,  
Who makes a way through the sea*

*And a path through the mighty waters,  
17 Who brings forth the chariot and the horse,  
The army and the mighty man  
(They will lie down together [and] not rise again;  
They have been quenched [and] extinguished like a wick):  
18 "Do not call to mind the former things,  
Or ponder things of the past.  
19 "Behold, I will do something new,  
Now it will spring forth;  
Will you not be aware of it?  
I will even make a roadway in the wilderness,  
Rivers in the desert.  
20 "The beasts of the field will glorify Me,  
The jackals and the ostriches,  
Because I have given waters in the wilderness  
And rivers in the desert,  
To give drink to My chosen people.  
21 "The people whom I formed for Myself  
Will declare My praise.*

He will make for them "a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters" (verse 16). This is how He did it before, when He made a path for them through the Red Sea (Exo 14:21-22). This is also the experience of all saints. The waters of the nations rage and go wild, enmity and persecution increase, but God has a path for His people. This path does not only relate to salvation from trouble, but also to the proclamation of the gospel that goes its way to the appointed end.

Verse 17 gives a reminder, also valid for the present time, of the all over-throwing power of God with regard to the armies of the nations. Whatever the rulers may think, it is the LORD Who "brings forth the chariot and the horse". The calamities of war are His judgments. By this He wants to bring the hearts of the people to repentance. He will also fulfill His national purposes and extinguish the fire of the battle of the enemies of His earthly people. This is how it happened with Pharaoh and his horsemen (Exo 14:23-31).



Then they may forget the sad time of unfaithfulness and oppression (verse 18). It may also mean that they should no longer think of the past as if God acted for His people only in that time. They may focus on the new that He is going to give (verse 19). He is not only the God of the past, but He is also the God of the present and of the future.

Let us apply these promises to our own experiences and take together the four sentences that are meant to comfort us in times of trial and tribulation:

1. through the waters (verse 2) – they are in themselves a means of giving us the experience of the presence of the Lord;
2. through the fire (verse 2) – we are assured that He keeps us;
3. through the sea and through the mighty waters (verse 16) – here God provides a way; difficult circumstances are a means to give us the awareness of His guidance;
4. in the wilderness and in the desert (verse 19) – therein guidance and refreshment are our part.

The waters speak of overwhelming trials; the wilderness and the desert speak of the state of the world around us which, if we concern ourselves with it without being commissioned to do so, will cause us spiritual suffering and depression. But God has a way in the midst of such circumstances, a path of fellowship with Him, a path of joy and fertility.

In the past, God made a way through the sea during the exodus and He gave a stream, a river of water, from the rock in the wilderness (1Cor 10:4). In the future He will give something new. He will make a roadway in the wilderness and rivers (plural) in the desert. The new will be a blessing for the whole earth when God's earthly people enjoy the blessings of His work of salvation.

When the suffering of Israel has come to an end, the suffering of creation has also come to an end (Rom 8:21). Because God gives water in the wilderness, the beasts of the field will honor Him (verse 20; Isa 35:1-7). Blessings are not only granted for the welfare of people and animals. The main purpose is the honor of God Himself (verse 21).

**Isa 43:22-25 | Israel and His Iniquities**

*22 "Yet you have not called on Me, O Jacob;*

*But you have become weary of Me, O Israel.*

*23 "You have not brought to Me the sheep of your burnt offerings,*

*Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices.*

*I have not burdened you with offerings,*

*Nor wearied you with incense.*

*24 "You have bought Me not sweet cane with money,*

*Nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices;*

*Rather you have burdened Me with your sins,*

*You have wearied Me with your iniquities.*

*25 "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake,*

*And I will not remember your sins.*

The difference between the accusations in verses 22-24 and the grace and mercy in verse 25 is great and striking. The first part recounts the iniquities of Israel consisting of five things they did not do and three things they did do. It shows that the coming salvation is not the merit of Israel, neither because of their loyalty nor because of their dignity. Spiritually, they are at a nadir. Instead of calling upon Him they have grown weary of Him (verse 22). Instead of bringing offerings to Him, they have burdened Him with their sins and wearied Him with their iniquities.

Verse 23 says that God did not impose a burden on them, but in verse 24 He says that their sins weigh heavily on Him, like the burden on a servant. Here we involuntarily think of the cross. At the cost of Himself the Lord Jesus took the burden of people's sins upon Himself. We will never be able to realize how great the weight has been for God not to spare His Son, but to deliver Him over for us (Rom 8:32).

In light of this we can better understand the contrast with verse 25. The love revealed herein is not at the expense of Divine holiness and righteousness, but they are the very basis of it. "For My own sake" expresses the free grace by which our sins have been removed, for there is nothing in the sinner that deserves it. Through the sovereign act of God's grace in Christ's death, His righteousness has dealt with sin. His grace and love have wiped out sin.

Therefore, verse 25 is not just a simple promise, but part of an argument. The salvation of Israel is not only a salvation from the oppression of other nations, but is also and above all a salvation through forgiveness of their sins and transgressions.

It looks ahead to what is brought forward in the letter to the Romans as the gospel. In it we learn that there is no merit on the part of man, that justification by grace takes place and that the conditions are repentance and faith. Through these Old Testament examples we get a deeper insight into the ways of God with man.

### **Isa 43:26-28 | Why Judgment Must Come**

26 *"Put Me in remembrance, let us argue our case together;  
State your [cause], that you may be proved right.*  
27 *"Your first forefather sinned,  
And your spokesmen have transgressed against Me.*  
28 *"So I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary,  
And I will consign Jacob to the ban and Israel to revilement.*

With his call in verse 26, the LORD commands his people to see if they can remember if there is any merit on their part by which He could justify them. He has just stated that He, and He alone, can and will wipe out their transgressions and purify them from their guilt. And furthermore, because this is their fault, He will do so not for their sake, but for His own sake.

Settlement of debt can only be on the basis of grace. The offer of grace is humiliating to man's pride. It presupposes the total inability of man to save himself. If they think otherwise, let them bring their case, as in a court of law, against His case. But Israel cannot answer and remains silent.

Immediately afterward, the LORD shows the impossibility of their success. Their first forefather has sinned, reminding us of Jacob as the ancestor of the people (verses 22,28). Their spokesmen, intermediaries between the people and the LORD, have transgressed against Him (verse 27). We can think of kings, priests and prophets. The people and also their leaders are sinners from the beginning and throughout their history. In view of their persistent unrepentance, especially of the superiors of the sanctuary, the priests, judgment is inevitable (verse 28).

The expression “consign ... to the ban” means the destruction of a people sunk so deep in sin that they no longer have a right to exist (cf. Jos 6:17-18,21; 1Sam 15:3). The holy place has become unholy and Israel has become like Canaan and Amalek. Sin means missing the goal or not achieving God’s glory. Instead of being the glory of God, the people have become to the total dishonor of God. Only grace is their hope.

## Isaiah 44

### **Isa 44:1-5 | The Spirit Poured Out**

1 *"But now listen, O Jacob, My servant,  
And Israel, whom I have chosen:*  
2 *Thus says the LORD who made you  
And formed you from the womb, who will help you,  
'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant;  
And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.*  
3 *'For I will pour out water on the thirsty [land]  
And streams on the dry ground;  
I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring  
And My blessing on your descendants;*  
4 *And they will spring up among the grass  
Like poplars by streams of water.'*  
5 *"This one will say, 'I am the LORD's';  
And that one will call on the name of Jacob;  
And another will write [on] his hand, 'Belonging to the LORD,'  
And will name Israel's name with honor.*

The infinite grace of God is beautifully demonstrated in the opening verses of this chapter. The reproaches and accusations of Isaiah 43 are directly followed by assurance and promise, based on God's purposed counsels and acts of creation concerning the people. It is evidence that in wrath He remembers mercy (Hab 3:2).

The chapter begins with a Divine "but" (verse 1), after He announced in the last verse of the previous chapter the judgment on the persistent sinfulness of the people (Isa 43:28). This corresponds remarkably with the "but" of the beginning of Isaiah 43 (Isa 43:1) which follows in the same sense the last verse of the chapter preceding it (Isa 42:25).

Here the LORD repeats His gracious statements from the beginning of Isaiah 43, to which He adds that He has "chosen" Israel. In both parts He uses for the birth of His people words which also appear in the account of the

creation of man: creating (Gen 1:27), making (Gen 1:16) and forming (Gen 2:7). It makes His purpose and promise to Jacob unchangeable, despite the great decay of His people.

He even calls them “Jeshurun” (verse 2), a Hebrew word that means “sincere” and in the Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament – is translated as “beloved”. It is a name previously used by Moses (Deu 32:15; 33:5,26) and looks forward to the future state of righteousness of Israel. However, this name is in great contrast to the name “Jacob” which means “heels holder” (Gen 27:36; 32:28). The LORD makes them the “sincere ones” and therefore He can save them.

The promises that follow are permeated with Divine delight. The thirsty become satiated, the seed of Jacob is blessed by the outpouring of the Spirit – in the picture of the outpouring of water (cf. Jn 7:38-39) – resulting in national and spiritual fertility (verses 3-4). That time is near. Grace will triumph. It is also a comfort for us now. Let us walk as God’s ‘Jeshurun’ and be filled with the Spirit. Then we will bring forth fruit.

Verse 5 predicts the consequence for the nations of the restoration of Israel. The triple testimony should be read in the light of Psalm 87 (Psa 87:4-5). There are mentioned some nations who will share in the privilege of knowing the LORD and who will be written down as born in Zion.

1. Among the nations who are in the blessing of the realm of peace, one shall say that he belongs to the LORD.
2. Another will pronounce the name of Jacob in a manner that shows great reverence. It is then no longer the name of defamation, of the deceiver, but the name of a people to whom the LORD has connected Himself as His chosen people.
3. Yet another shall declare in writing, “write [on] his hand”, that he belongs only to the LORD, and shall take the name ‘Israel’ as his honorary name. By adopting the name of Israel he indicates that carrying that name is a great honor (cf. Rom 11:12).
4. There is a remarkable parallel between this verse and the result of the gospel we preach. Just as in the future day a heathen will acknowledge that he belongs to the LORD, someone who repents today will learn to ac-

knowledge that he belongs to the Lord (1Cor 3:23; Gal 3:29) and so he also mentions the Name of the Lord (2Tim 2:19).

### Isa 44:6-8 | There Is No Other God

6 *“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:  
‘I am the first and I am the last,  
And there is no God besides Me.  
7 ‘Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it;  
Yes, let him recount it to Me in order,  
From the time that I established the ancient nation.  
And let them declare to them the things that are coming  
And the events that are going to take place.  
8 ‘Do not tremble and do not be afraid;  
Have I not long since announced [it] to you and declared [it]?  
And you are My witnesses.  
Is there any God besides Me,  
Or is there any [other] Rock?  
I know of none.”*

In verse 6 the LORD speaks for the third time that He is the “Redeemer” of Israel (Isa 41:14; 43:14). Then He presents Himself in yet other ways, which at the same time mean new reproaches for their foolish idolatry. He says of Himself: “I am the first and I am the last.” He does this three times in Isaiah (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). The Lord Jesus also calls Himself with this name three times (Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:13), with which He shows His Godhead and also the unity in the Godhead, the eternal pre-existence and the absolute exaltation.

It indicates that everything that is created, animate and inanimate, owes its existence to Him, and that the beginning, the course and the end are under His exalted control. Therefore, Israel may be sure that all Divine promises and predictions will be fulfilled, for they are made by Him Who is their “King ... the LORD of hosts”.

In our circumstances, He Who redeemed us is also the First and the Last, for He is God the Son (Jn 1:1). He stands at the beginning and at the end,

for He is the Creator (Col 1:16). He is also “the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev 22:13), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, for He is the Word of God (Jn 1:1). He is at the beginning of our new life in Christ, He will be with us and will fulfill all His counsels toward us. Thus He is also the beginning, the course and the completion of our special service which He has entrusted to us.

In verses 7-8 the LORD repeats what He said before (Isa 41:22-23; 43:9-10). There is only one God, the First and the Last, the one true God of the past, Who is able to determine the future and thus also to proclaim it. Again, He challenges whether there is anyone who can proclaim or explain things as He does, and does so in regular order. He Himself has done so since He “established the ancient nation”. He raised up prophets among them who have proclaimed “the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place”. Let the gods and prophets of the nations explain such things.

No god of the nations can answer this challenge. That is why Israel can be free of fear and can trust in God, next to Whom there is no other. In spite of all the attacks of satan, they are witnesses of Who He is and of the immutable nature of His counsel. Why should they be frightened and fearful when He is their Rock (Deu 32:4,15,18,30,31; 1Cor 10:4)? The rock represents immobility, strength and protection.

Let us, whom He left here as His witnesses, find our support in this. Things around us are in motion and uncertain. Everything changes, governments change, but He remains the same (Heb 1:12; 13:8).

### **Isa 44:9-20 | The Idols Mocked**

*9 Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame. 10 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit? 11 Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame. 12 The man shapes iron into a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails;*



*he drinks no water and becomes weary. 13 [Another] shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house. 14 Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises [it] for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow. 15 Then it becomes [something] for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it. 16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over [this] half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire." 17 But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god." 18 They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend. 19 No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat [it]. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!" 20 He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"*

The whole message of the previous section is: 'Trust Me, the Rock, and not the idols.' Again and again the people tend to trust the idols of the nations. In this light one of the most striking of all Divine protests against the idols and their creators follows in these verses in flowery language (cf. Jer 10:1-16).

There are two things to note on the subject of 'idols'. One is that behind the idols are demons (Deu 32:17a; 1Cor 10:19-20; Rev 9:20). This means that serving idols is actually serving demons. The images represent concrete demonic powers, angels of satan. This also applies especially to the image that the antichrist will make (Rev 13:14-15).

The other thing is that idols are 'nothing'. They are 'vanities', 'nullities', that is to say, they represent nothing. Anyone who thinks that the image, the product of human hands, can help is a great fool. Anyone who seeks the help of the idols will also fall into chaos. Pointing out this foolishness,

demonstrating its ridiculousness, will also work deliverance from the power of demons for him who realizes it.

The LORD ridicules those idols. Unlike Israel as God's witness, the *idols* give testimony of their own powerlessness (verse 9). From this self-testimony a scathing mockery is poured out over their *makers*. What foolishness it is to fabricate your own god and then expect something of it (verse 10). Surely it is clear to every sensible person that a dead piece of material can't work anything, isn't it (verse 11)? God creates man, but these people put it the other way around: man creates with a waste of all his powers a god – an image of metal or of wood – for which he fashions the material himself (verses 12-14).

In the same way, man today is creating himself a god according to his own 'dimensions'. Not the Bible is the standard, but one's own judgment. Man wants a god who fulfills his wishes, who acts as he thinks is right. We are perhaps more guilty of this idolatry than we are aware of. A god who is only full of love and does not take evil so seriously, is such a god of one's own making. The same goes for a god who can only judge and from whom no pity can be expected.

God here condemns Israel, who has turned from his Maker to the heathen use of idols. In verses 15-17 we see how the same piece of wood serves to satisfy both the natural and religious needs of a human being. It shows that sinful man in his folly pursues the satisfaction of both needs in the same way. The whole part is full of man's activity. They work hard, but without knowledge, for they are "darkened in their understanding" (verses 18-19; Eph 4:17-18).

None of them get the idea that they are engaged in supreme foolishness. They feed on ashes, on something from which all life has disappeared, in which nothing useful is present anymore (verse 20). They do not notice that they are engaged in deceit. It is clear that praying to these images, which are made by human hands, is vain and useless.

It's like so many people today who willingly allow themselves to be deceived by horoscopes and occultism, rather than come into contact with the truth. They simply don't wonder if it could also be deceit. If they do not repent, they will not save their lives and will perish forever.

The danger of idolatry is also not limited to unbelievers, because believers are also warned of this danger: “Little children, guard yourselves from idols” (1Jn 5:21). In addition to serving images, there are many things that can take the place of the one true God, for example the Mammon, the god of money (Mt 6:24). That is why the call to flee the love of money sounds (1Tim 6:10-11).

### Isa 44:21-23 | The LORD Does Not Forget His People

21 *“Remember these things, O Jacob,  
And Israel, for you are My servant;  
I have formed you, you are My servant,  
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.  
22 “I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud  
And your sins like a heavy mist.  
Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”  
23 Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done [it]!  
Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth;  
Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains,  
O forest, and every tree in it;  
For the LORD has redeemed Jacob  
And in Israel He shows forth His glory.*

Then from verse 21, after the activities of man in the previous verses, come the activities of the LORD. He reminds His people to keep in mind that He, the LORD, is the only true God and that the idols are nothing. He bases His exhortation on the facts that they owe their existence as a people to His supernatural activity and that as His people they are His “servant”. The second fact is a direct contrast with the idolatrous slaves of a piece of wood from a tree, as described in the previous verses.

This brings God’s heart to an expression of infinite grace. His people will not be forgotten by Him. He will wipe out their transgressions like a thick cloud and their sins like a heavy mist (verse 22). Let them return to Him, for He has redeemed them after all! The word for “wipe out” is used for the wiping out or blotting out of

1. a name from a book (Exo 32:32-33; Psalms 69:28);

2. a curse (Num 5:23);
3. the remembrance of a people (Deu 25:19);
4. sin or sins (Neh 4:5; Psa 51:1,9; 109:14; Jer 18:23; Isa 43:25; 44:23).

Transgressions and sins are clearly seen here as things that bring separation between God and man (Isa 59:2). Only the purification by His wind (Job 37:21) and the sunshine of His grace expels the cloud. All removal of guilt is only possible through the blood of Christ. His work underlies the promises made here by the LORD. The subject here is restoration, the re-establishment of fellowship, which is reflected in the invitation: "Return to Me."

Verses 21-22 contain a very beneficial assurance of past salvation, a promise of remembering it in the future, and an invitation to return to the fellowship with God they had in the past. In view of these glorious statements, in a song of thanksgiving the whole creation is called upon to rejoice and to share in the consequences of the forgiveness that has come to Israel (verse 23). Creation will also be set free from the curse of sin (Rom 8:21). Freedom will be the hallmark of glory. The essence of the glory that will be enjoyed by the nations lies in the fact that the LORD will glorify Himself in Israel. In the coming sections this thought will be further explained.

### **Isa 44:24-28 | The LORD Promises Restoration**

*24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and the  
one who formed you from the womb,  
"I, the LORD, am the maker of all things,  
Stretching out the heavens by Myself  
And spreading out the earth all alone,  
25 Causing the omens of boasters to fail,  
Making fools out of diviners,  
Causing wise men to draw back  
And turning their knowledge into foolishness,  
26 Confirming the word of His servant  
And performing the purpose of His messengers.  
[It is I] who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!'  
And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.'*

*And I will raise up her ruins [again].*

27 *"[It is I] who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!'*

*And I will make your rivers dry.*

28 *"[It is I] who says of Cyrus, '[He is] My shepherd!*

*And he will perform all My desire.'*

*And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,'*

*And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"*

The Redeemer of Israel, Who formed His earthly people since their earthly existence, is the LORD Who made everything (verse 24). He formed His people, but also heaven and earth. He can and wants to redeem Israel as well. This redemption is now explained. Jerusalem is rebuilt and Babylon is judged. This explanation starts with "thus says the LORD" as an indication of a new section.

Verse 25 refers to the Babylonian soothsayers. Perhaps the Jews who live there are also tempted to ask these fortune-tellers how things will go. The LORD will cut off that road. He deals with these soothsayers with the same power with which He created heaven and earth and makes their so-called knowledge foolish (cf. 1Cor 1:20b). The LORD is the Only One Who truly foretells the future (Isa 41:21-29), while the soothsayers are unmasked as inventors of lies.

The LORD turns the wisdom of the world into foolishness, while confirming the word of His servant and carrying out the announcement of His messengers (verse 26; 1Cor 1:21-22). Let us, to whom the message of the gospel has been entrusted, draw new courage from it. Amidst religious superstition and various forms of opposition, we know that His Word will not return to Him empty (Isa 55:11). Israel is the faithful servant here, as are all the faithful prophets through whom God gives His message to His people and to the nations. The servant is also now the one through whom God speaks. If His Word is faithfully passed on, He will do so because it is His Word.

In order to fulfill His Word toward His people, He causes the rivers of Babylon to dry up (verse 27). Again (Isa 41:2,25) King Cyrus is mentioned by name, about 160 years before his performance. This is a proof that only

He, the one true God, Who created heaven and earth, is capable of making that advance announcement.

What Cyrus will do in draining the rivers of Babylon to capture it, to this end he receives from the LORD the insight. This gives him the opportunity to work on the destruction of Babylon and to restore Jerusalem (verse 28). The LORD calls Cyrus “My shepherd” because in this as an instrument in His hand, however weak, he is a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who will deliver His people in a perfect and definitive way and bring them into the blessing.

## Isaiah 45

### **Isa 45:1-8 | Cyrus Called by the LORD**

*1 Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed,  
Whom I have taken by the right hand,  
To subdue nations before him  
And to loose the loins of kings;  
To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:  
2 "I will go before you and make the rough places smooth;  
I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars.  
3 "I will give you the treasures of darkness  
And hidden wealth of secret places,  
So that you may know that it is I,  
The LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.  
4 "For the sake of Jacob My servant,  
And Israel My chosen [one],  
I have also called you by your name;  
I have given you a title of honor  
Though you have not known Me.  
5 "I am the LORD, and there is no other;  
Besides Me there is no God.  
I will gird you, though you have not known Me;  
6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun  
That there is no one besides Me.  
I am the LORD, and there is no other,  
7 The One forming light and creating darkness,  
Causing well-being and creating calamity;  
I am the LORD who does all these.  
8 "Drip down, O heavens, from above,  
And let the clouds pour down righteousness;  
Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit,  
And righteousness spring up with it.  
I, the LORD, have created it.*

This chapter begins with a second message from the LORD about Cyrus (verse 1). The first message is a prophecy foretelling His coming (Isa 44:28). Now it is a word to him personally. He is a heathen ruler, but the LORD has taken his right hand, indicating that he is an instrument in the hand of the LORD, although he is not at all aware of being subject to a higher power (verse 5). This is a world of difference with Asaph, who is aware that the LORD has taken hold of his right hand (Psa 73:23).

The titles granted to him and the provisions made for him are unique. Something similar has never been said of any heathen ruler. He is called the 'anointed' of the LORD, that is literally 'messiah'. Earlier the LORD has already called him "My shepherd" (Isa 44:28). The fact that Isaiah uses the title 'anointed' for a heathen ruler will have amazed the Jews. After all, it is a title reserved for priests and kings of Israel. But why now someone from the nations? That is precisely the message of God, that He is not only the God of Israel, but of the entire world. He can use whoever He wants and save whoever He wants.

The LORD will use Cyrus and pave his way by removing all obstacles before him. He will be able to penetrate everywhere (verse 2; cf. Isa 40:4). Through his conquests he will obtain immense riches (verse 3). The redemption brought about by Cyrus is a prelude to the redemption that the Lord Jesus, the true Anointed of God, the Messiah, will bring about at His return.

The details of verses 1-3 are given in the prophecy of the prophet Daniel. There it is Darius who takes Babylon, but behind him we see the rising power of Cyrus. We see how Belshazzar is deprived of all power, how the gates of Babylon are broken open, with the result that all hidden treasures end up in the hands of Cyrus (Dan 5:25-30).

The LORD will do the same, that Cyrus may come to the acknowledgment that He has led him and given him that prosperity. He does not seem to have come to that acknowledgment. Nevertheless, he will receive all that wealth and prosperity because, without knowing it himself, he is the deliverer of God's people who delivers them from exile in Babylon (verse 4; Ezra 1:1-4). The confirmation that it is the LORD and no one else (cf. 1Cor 8:4b-6) to Whom he owes his prosperity is in verse 5. The goal the LORD



has in mind is that one will know on the whole earth that He alone is the true and only God (verse 6). The restoration that Cyrus will grant to God's people must have this result.

"Light" and "darkness" are in God's hand (verse 7). In the creation of light (Gen 1:3), the creation of darkness, although not explicitly stated, is contained. Light is said to be good (Gen 1:4). This is not said of darkness. What we do read, however, is that God, when He sees everything He has made, including darkness, saw that it was very good (Gen 1:2-5,31). This presupposes that the darkness is not something negative, because the darkness has been given a function by God (cf. Psa 104:19-24). God, Who in His creation has given a place to darkness, which is not evil in itself, can use the darkness after the fall into sin to symbolize something evil with it. Thus, He Who is exalted above all things can cause "well-being" where there is discontent, but can also create "calamity" and bring it as punishment on sin (cf. Isa 10:5-12).

In the same way, God does not make man wicked, but when he reveals himself in this way, God knows how to use him for His purpose (Pro 16:4; Amos 3:6b). Here it is about wars with their terrible consequences, as Cyrus will fight them, and the well-being that will come from them for Israel.

In verse 8 the statement of verse 7 focuses on salvation and follows the assurance that the LORD will establish righteousness on earth as a blessing from heaven. Thus righteousness will also be produced on earth. Here again in Cyrus we can recognize a type of Christ, the King of righteousness, the true Melchizedek Who will come.

### **Isa 45:9-13 | The LORD Is the Maker**

9 *"Woe to [the one] who quarrels with his Maker —  
An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth!  
Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?'  
Or the thing you are making [say], 'He has no hands'?"*  
10 *"Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?'  
Or to a woman, 'To what are you giving birth?'"*  
11 *Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker:  
"Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons,*

*And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.*

*12 "It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it.*

*I stretched out the heavens with My hands*

*And I ordained all their host.*

*13 "I have aroused him in righteousness*

*And I will make all his ways smooth;*

*He will build My city and will let My exiles go free,*

*Without any payment or reward," says the LORD of hosts.*

In verse 9 the word is no longer addressed to Cyrus, but to those who criticize the actions of the LORD. They are not satisfied with the course of events. How can God use a man like Cyrus? But God says: 'Woe, how dare you criticize My government?' "Woe" is a cry that is exclaimed at funerals, a cry that shows the seriousness of the matter. He who complains about God is nothing more than an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth. It is reminiscent of a bowl or jug of pottery that has broken and the shards of which can only be swept together to be thrown away.

Surely it is supreme folly that a potter would be told by the thing he makes that he is not doing well, isn't it (Rom 9:20-21)? Just as foolish is it when someone blames his father and mother for a birth to which he himself has not contributed or cannot contribute anything (verse 10). God is not only the Creator of all matter, but He is also the Origin of human life. Such fools would do better to put really everything in the hands of the LORD and to trust without contradiction Him Who alone can be trusted, both for the present and for the future (verse 11).

He made everything and everything is completely dependent on Him (verse 12). Likewise, He also aroused Cyrus and destined and paved the way for him in view of the goal He has set Himself (verse 13). Cyrus will rebuild the city of Jerusalem and no one else. He will do so because the LORD wants it and not because an agreement has been made whereby the LORD should pay for the redemption of His people. All haughty, stupid objections will not change the LORD's purpose. Through Cyrus the LORD will bring His people there.

The Lord also gives us restoration to function as a church in the way He sees fit and with the means He chooses and not in our foolish way. From

this portion we may find the confirmation for our hearts that everything is under the control of the Maker of heaven and earth and that His purposes toward the nations are inviolable. This affirmation will also be helpful in helping others who wonder whether God will finally be stronger than His enemies and whether He will still provide relief.

### **Isa 45:14 | Only God Is With Israel**

*14 Thus says the LORD,  
 "The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush  
 And the Sabeans, men of stature,  
 Will come over to you and will be yours;  
 They will walk behind you, they will come over in chains  
 And will bow down to you;  
 They will make supplication to you:  
 'Surely, God is with you, and there is none else,  
 No other God.'"*

In this verse the message of the LORD of the near future concerning Cyrus passes to the restoration of Israel in the end time. The redemption through Cyrus, as we have seen before, is a foretaste of the redemption of Israel through Christ in the future, at the end of the great tribulation. The facts mentioned here did not take place in the past. They will only take place at the return of Christ. Nations will voluntarily submit to Israel and give up their idolatry. This will happen by acknowledging that only God is with them and no other God. Then also the promise of the covenant will be fulfilled that Israel will be the head of the nations of the world (Deu 28:13).

This verse finds its parallel for us in 1 Corinthians 14 (1Cor 14:25; cf. Rev 3:9), where the apostle Paul probably has these words of Isaiah in mind. The Lord wants what will be true for Israel in the future day to be true for us now. The purpose of our testimony is to build up, to confirm. It is God's good pleasure for local churches to draw the souls of ignorant and unbelieving people to Christ. The Spirit of God wants to work in and through us collectively to make such people aware of the presence of God and to become true worshippers.

### **Isa 45:15-17 | Idol Worshipers Put to Shame**

| *15 Truly, You are a God who hides Himself,*

*O God of Israel, Savior!*

*16 They will be put to shame and even humiliated, all of them;  
The manufacturers of idols will go away together in humiliation.*

*17 Israel has been saved by the LORD*

*With an everlasting salvation;*

*You will not be put to shame or humiliated*

*To all eternity.*

In verse 15 Israel is speaking and not the heathens as in the previous verse. It is not an expression of a groping for a God Who cannot be found because He has turned away from them (cf. Isa 57:17), but that God in His actions and government as far as the nations are concerned is often untraceable. He does things which are hidden from people, but which He makes known to His people. The human mind cannot understand Him in this.

Israel will be most surprised to see that nations who have walked in the darkness of heathenism will come to them and acknowledge that God is with them. It is as if Israel is saying: 'Truly, You have acted in a wonderful way, in a way that far surpasses our thinking.' It recalls the apostle's exclamation about the depths of the riches of God's knowledge and wisdom that follows the rendering of mercy to both Israel and the Gentiles (Rom 11:32-33). Israel addresses Him as "Savior" because they will see in Him in the realm of peace the Savior Who redeemed both Israel and the nations.

To conclude the part that began in Isaiah 44:6, there is the enormous difference between the fate of the creators of idols and the infinite blessing of Israel (verses 16-17). Of all that God does, the idolaters and manufacturers of idols and soothsayers know nothing. They are all put to shame. It ends with the great result of all God's actions to which the prophets have pointed: the deliverance, glory and joy of Israel without end. Here again the prophet points forward to the distant future, for the redemption from Babylon is not an everlasting redemption.

### **Isa 45:18-19 | The Work of the LORD**

*18 For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the  
God who formed the earth and made it, He established it [and] did  
not create it a waste place, [but] formed it to be inhabited),*

*"I am the LORD, and there is none else.*

*19 "I have not spoken in secret,  
In some dark land;  
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,  
'Seek Me in a waste place';  
I, the LORD, speak righteousness,  
Declaring things that are upright.*

In verse 18 the LORD is introduced as Speaker. First it is brought up again that He is the Creator of heaven and earth. He has been shaping the earth, "formed", and has finished His work, "made". He did not create the earth so that it would remain waste or formless and void (Gen 1:2). God creates order in what is waste or formless and void. He does not do half the work, but completes what He once started (cf. Phil 1:6).

The creation of the earth, its formation and completion, is not an end in itself. With its creation, God has man in mind. So it is with the formation and redemption of His people. The LORD has started once with the formation of the people of Israel, He will also complete that work. He does this by redeeming Israel. In Babylon it is a mess and many of the Jews took part in that mess and idolatry. The LORD is going to change that. He wants to bring His people in the full enjoyment of the blessing. The earth will then be inhabited in the way God purposed in creation. This will be fulfilled in the realm of peace.

From the end of verse 18 to the end of the chapter the LORD is speaking. He begins by confirming what has just been said, that He and only He is the LORD. He has not spoken in secret, as the soothsayers and sorcerers do from the dark realm of the abyss where spiritists and necromancers dwell (verse 19). God does not ask to seek Him without expecting anything. On the contrary, when He invites to seek Him, He speaks what is right. He is completely reliable and not unreliable like the soothsayers.

He gives promises to those who seek Him. "He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb 11:6). He fulfills His promises according to His righteousness: He speaks "righteousness". He does not fool anyone. His word is certain, reliable, you can rely on it. All His promises to His earthly people will be fulfilled, as well as all the promises we have received (2Cor 1:20).

**Isa 45:20-21 | The Idols and the LORD**

*20 "Gather yourselves and come;  
Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations;  
They have no knowledge,  
Who carry about their wooden idol  
And pray to a god who cannot save.  
21 "Declare and set forth [your case];  
Indeed, let them consult together.  
Who has announced this from of old?  
Who has long since declared it?  
Is it not I, the LORD?  
And there is no other God besides Me,  
A righteous God and a Savior;  
There is none except Me.*

As in verses 14-17, the restoration of Israel is followed by offering blessing to the nations. These nations that have escaped judgment on the world and been brought into the realm of peace have not been worshipers of the beast, for those nations have all been wiped out by judgment (verse 20; Rev 14:9-11).

It is not about Israelites who have escaped the nations – which “fugitives of the nations” might suggest – but nations who have escaped the judgments that have been exercised on them. They are again summoned by God in a lawsuit to make a verdict.

In the light of that future blessing, God resumes His protest against their idols and once again says how foolish it is to expect redemption from an idol. Nor can these idols say anything about future things, something that God challenges them to do in order to make clear their utter inability to do so (verse 21). Only He is capable of this and no one else.

He alone is both the righteous and the redeeming God. As the righteous God He must and will judge sin. As the redeeming God, He redeems through His Son, Who has fulfilled His righteous requirements by suffering judgment for everyone who confesses to be a sinner.

The God of Israel is the God Who created heaven and earth. Therefore He is the only true God. Therefore He also is the Only One Who is able to

redeem Israel. For the nations, this is another call to recognize the God of Israel and thereby participate in the blessings of the realm of peace together with the people of Israel (Rev 14:6-7).

### **Isa 45:22-25 | With the LORD Is Righteousness**

22 *"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;  
For I am God, and there is no other.*

23 *"I have sworn by Myself,  
The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness  
And will not turn back,  
That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear [allegiance].  
24 "They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.'  
Men will come to Him,  
And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame.  
25 "In the LORD all the offspring of Israel  
Will be justified and will glory."*

The statement of God in the lawsuit concerning Himself in the preceding verse is followed by the commanding invitation to the nations to turn to Him for salvation (cf. Mt 11:28). In this way one will receive the blessings of the realm of peace (verse 22). For the third time He declares: "I am God, and there is no other." After His glorious presentation in verse 21 as "a righteous God and a Savior" which He wants to be for Jew and Gentile, He solemnly declares by swearing an oath that the moment will come when He will be acknowledged worldwide as God (verse 23). This will happen in the millennial realm of peace.

Bowing the knee speaks of acknowledging and submitting to the authority of the LORD as opposed to bowing the knee before the idols and acknowledging their authority. The names of the idols will be eradicated (Zec 13:2). Confession with the tongue indicates consent to the infallibility and righteousness of His judgment. That this word will not be turned back means that there will be no failure to fulfill what has been spoken (cf. Isa 55:11).

Paul quotes this verse in connection with an evil quality of us as believers that we judge others so easily (Rom 14:10-12). Through this verse of Isaiah he is already placing us, as it were, before the judgment seat of God. When

we think of the judgment seat of God before which we will be standing *in the future*, we would like to live as if we are standing before it *now*. Then we would like to be accountable to God right now, at this very moment.

The result of this thought is that we will come to the conclusion that we should not (any longer) judge each other. We will then leave that to God. Each person will bow down before God and acknowledge Him as God. That makes us very small. From another quote Paul makes from this verse it is clear that the Lord Jesus is the One to Whom every knee will bow (Phil 2:10). This is another proof that the Lord Jesus is God.

The great acknowledgment in the future day is that everything can only be found with and in the LORD (verses 24-25). He will be acknowledged and accepted in all His attributes, power and actions. In these verses the emphasis is repeatedly placed on God's righteousness as the basis of His actions. In verse 21 it is righteousness and salvation. Here it is righteousness and strength (verse 24). Strength comes only when we walk in righteousness, in a righteous way before Him. From all sides of the world men will come to Him, but those who are angry at Him will be put to shame.

The offspring of Israel will be justified, not by works of the law, but "in the LORD" (verse 25). They will joyfully acknowledge their Messiah in Him through their connection with Him. In Him they will boast and not in their own exaltation and power. And Israel will have a spiritual offspring, descendants who are all justified by the atoning sacrifice on Calvary.



## Isaiah 46

### Introduction

With this chapter there is a change of subject. Now there will follow three prophecies about the idolatry in Babylon. However, there is a connection with the previous chapters because the prophet has foretold what Israel can expect through the arousing and service of Cyrus. Now Isaiah is going to show what Cyrus will do to Babylon, making the powerlessness of Babylon and its idols clear. This Persian ruler will be the instrument in the hand of the LORD to judge the gods of Babylon.

At the same time, the three prophecies contain things that are still future in connection with Israel, and are an exhortation to God's people to keep themselves completely free from idolatry. The first prophecy is in this chapter, the second is in Isaiah 47 and the third is in Isaiah 48. The first deals with the gods, the second with Babylon itself, and the third with those who are delivered out of Babylon and depart from it.

The third and final prophecy finds its full fulfillment in the end time, when God's people are called to depart from the prophetic Babylon, the religious system in the end time (Rev 18:4). That system is recognizable to us in the professing Christianity with papacy at its head.

### Isa 46:1-2 | Idols Have to Be Carried

*1 Bel has bowed down, Nebo stoops over;  
Their images are [consigned] to the beasts and the cattle.  
The things that you carry are burdensome,  
A load for the weary [beast].  
2 They stooped over, they have bowed down together;  
They could not rescue the burden,  
But have themselves gone into captivity.*

The main gods of Babylon – Bel and Nebo (verse 1) – are presented as gods who succumb. “Bel” means ‘lord’. It is the title of Enlil, the father of the gods, and later of Marduk, the god of the city of Babylon, similar to the

idol Jupiter of the Romans. Bel is represented by a large human image with the horns of a bull. The image speaks of ‘worldly power’. “Nebo” is one of the main idols, similar to the idol Mercury of the Romans. It is the god of writers and intelligence. He is the son of Marduk and the protector of the royal family. It represents ‘worldly wisdom’. Their names can be found in names of persons like Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar.

“The beasts” that carry them, such as camels and elephants, collapse, as well as “the cattle” on which they are loaded, such as horses and donkeys. In spite of all efforts, these gods do not reach the place where they are supposed to be brought to be safe. Instead of being carried around in a procession to their honor – a ritual that takes place every year with New Year – they become a booty of the conqueror (verse 2). They fell into the hands of their enemy Cyrus and could not be saved. That shows how impotent they are. They could not save themselves, let alone save others.

### **Isa 46:3-4 | The LORD Bears His People**

3 *“Listen to Me, O house of Jacob,  
And all the remnant of the house of Israel,  
You who have been borne by Me from birth  
And have been carried from the womb;  
4 Even to [your] old age I will be the same,  
And even to [your] graying years I will bear [you]!  
I have done [it], and I will carry [you];  
And I will bear [you] and I will deliver [you].*

The rest of the chapter consists of three admonitions. The first is to Israel (verses 3-7), the second to the apostates of the people, those connected with the idolaters (verses 8-11), the third to the rebellious (verses 12-13).

The first admonition reminds the people of their unique origins and support. As the seed of Abraham, they were formed and have been *carried* by God (Deu 1:31; 32:11-12) and He has cared for them from their earliest days (verse 3). That is the past. As for the future, He is the Unchanging. He promises that He will carry them (verse 4), a great contrast to the gods of Babylon that must be carried (verses 1-2) and are unable to help and carry their servants.

It is the Lord Jesus Who “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb 1:3). He it is Who “Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross” (1Pet 2:24). And it is also He Who as the High Priest now carries us on His shoulders and on His chest (cf. Exo 28:12-29). God bore His people on eagles’ wings and brought them to Himself (Exo 19:4). It is an encouragement for the remnant to whom the LORD assures that His care for them will not fail in their exercises, no matter how long they take, no matter how old they get. It is also an encouragement for every old believer in our time.

The question today is also: Do we carry the things we idolize or does God carry us? Idols like money and pleasure do not give support and outcome when life ends. Nor can they carry us through the difficulties. But those who know God, revealed in Jesus Christ, are carried by Him to and beyond the end of life to be with Him forever.

#### **Isa 46:5-7 | The Idols Mocked**

5 *“To whom would you liken Me  
And make Me equal and compare Me,  
That we would be alike?*  
6 *“Those who lavish gold from the purse  
And weigh silver on the scale  
Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it [into] a god;  
They bow down, indeed they worship it.  
7 “They lift it upon the shoulder [and] carry it;  
They set it in its place and it stands [there].  
It does not move from its place.  
Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer;  
It cannot deliver him from his distress.*

Is this God to be compared with someone or is there something to be equated with Him (verse 5)? To ask the question is to answer it. Place any idol beside Him and the foolishness to invest money in that god and call upon him will become clear (verses 6-7). It does not matter if it is a god of gold for the rich or a god of wood for the poor, because what is the use of a god you have to carry with you and lug him around? God ridicules the gods and those who lug with them around. Putting your hope in such gods is the stupidest thing you can do.

**Isa 46:8-11 | There Is No Other God**

8 *“Remember this, and be assured;  
Recall it to mind, you transgressors.*  
9 *“Remember the former things long past,  
For I am God, and there is no other;  
[I am] God, and there is no one like Me,*  
10 *Declaring the end from the beginning,  
And from ancient times things which have not been done,  
Saying, ‘My purpose will be established,  
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;*  
11 *Calling a bird of prey from the east,  
The man of My purpose from a far country.  
Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass.  
I have planned [it, surely] I will do it.*

The second admonition begins with a call based on the foregoing. It is addressed to those who surrender to idolatry. Let them be “assured”, literally “firm”, i.e. let them be men, that is, let them be powerful instead of faltering (verse 8). Let them think of what has happened before, of the great truths regarding His Person, He Who is totally unique, to Whom no one is equal (verse 9). He determines the course of history (verse 10). That is why He can predict it. He has always foretold how things will go. Has He ever put them to shame in this? What He has said in the past has all come true. Let them therefore learn the lesson of history and take it to heart.

That He is perfectly trustworthy has been proven by His actions throughout the history of the people. This will also be proved in the future when He introduces the man of His purpose (verse 11). This is about Cyrus. He is the “bird of prey” from the east, that is Persia. He is looking for prey, that is Babylon. Through this man the LORD will bring judgment on the enemies of Israel and thereby also deliver His people.

Here again, Cyrus is a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who will also come from the east to judge the enemies of His people and thereby deliver and bless His people. With a double promise, “I will bring it to pass” and “I will do it”, the LORD establishes its fulfillment.

It is good for the believer when he remembers the past, that he learns from the past how the Lord helped and guided and delivered him. It stimulates the soul to praise Him and it stimulates faith and hope for the future.

### **Isa 46:12-13 | His Righteousness Is Near**

*12 "Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded,  
Who are far from righteousness.*

*13 "I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off,  
And My salvation will not delay.*

*And I will grant salvation in Zion,  
[And] My glory for Israel.*

The third admonition is addressed to those who resist God's will. They are the "stubborn-minded" (verse 12). Their unbelief has caused doubt on God's promises and removed the desire to know them. As a result, they are without the salvation He gives on the basis of righteousness. But there is salvation for those who accept His conditions (verse 13). Isaiah is here again evangelical. He offers God's righteousness. They can accept it without making certain efforts or making a far journey (cf. Deu 30:11-14; Rom 10:6-10).

Righteousness is the basis for salvation. God will give salvation to Zion and His glory will come to Israel. His "salvation" is a clear reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus. Salvation is connected to His Name and His work. In Him God gives salvation to Zion and His glory to Israel.

This will be done on the basis of His righteousness which He has established for Israel. That foundation is, as for us, the death of Christ. The glory of the LORD who will leave the people (Eze 9:3; 11:23) will return to them. This will happen in full measure, so that Israel, which shines in Divine splendor, will reflect His glory with dignity.

## Isaiah 47

### **Isa 47:1-4 | The Judgment Announced**

*1 "Come down and sit in the dust,  
O virgin daughter of Babylon;  
Sit on the ground without a throne,  
O daughter of the Chaldeans!  
For you shall no longer be called tender and delicate.  
2 "Take the millstones and grind meal.  
Remove your veil, strip off the skirt,  
Uncover the leg, cross the rivers.  
3 "Your nakedness will be uncovered,  
Your shame also will be exposed;  
I will take vengeance and will not spare a man."  
4 Our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts is His name,  
The Holy One of Israel.*

The previous chapter gives the judgment on the gods of Babylon. This chapter explains the judgment on Babylon itself. The LORD speaks directly to Babylon. He shows her how enormously she will be humiliated. Her pride will be humiliated down to the dust (verse 1). She who was first a queen and commander must now do the tiresome handiwork of a female slave. As a prisoner she will be forced to give up her modesty and wade through rivers (verses 2-3).

All this humiliation Babylon has to blame herself for because of her cruel treatment of God's people. The LORD avenges Himself to them and proves Himself as the Redeemer of His people (verse 4). As the "LORD of hosts" He has absolute authority. As "the Holy One of Israel" He indicates what the character of His people should be in their connection with Him. It also indicates the contrast with the unholy character of Babylon.

Although the LORD speaks to Babylon here, the message is addressed to Israel, to those who have also fallen into the sin of idolatry. By seeing the end of the way of idolatry, Israel must learn to thoroughly condemn this

evil in their own hearts. As often happens, the judgment is described in the past perfect tense, as if everything has already taken place.

In the near future, the song of praise of verse 4 will sound again from the mouth of Israel when the fall of Babylon is announced (Rev 19:1-3). There, Babylon is the representation of professing Christianity of Europe, papacy, which first has power over the beast, the dictator of the restored Roman Empire, the united Europe, but then is destroyed by the beast (Rev 17:3-4,16).

### **Isa 47:5-7 | Reason for Judgment**

5 *"Sit silently, and go into darkness,  
O daughter of the Chaldeans,  
For you will no longer be called  
The queen of kingdoms.*  
6 *"I was angry with My people,  
I profaned My heritage  
And gave them into your hand.  
You did not show mercy to them,  
On the aged you made your yoke very heavy.*  
7 *"Yet you said, 'I will be a queen forever.'  
These things you did not consider  
Nor remember the outcome of them.*

The king of Babylon has been called "king of kings" (Eze 26:7; Dan 2:37), one who commands other kingdoms. But that will be over (verse 5). Babylon will go into darkness to hide herself because of the shame she has fallen prey to. This is her fate because she has exceeded her task, which is to serve in the hand of the LORD as a disciplinarian rod for His people (verse 6). In His anger God used Babylon to discipline His people. He even has His sanctuary profaned. But Babylon has had her own motives in the subjugation of Israel. Babylon will be judged by God because of her treatment of His people and His sanctuary (Jer 50:28).

This is also important for us when exercising discipline in the church. This should only be done in humility, in the awareness that the church members are no better than the one on whom discipline should be exercised.

Otherwise God's discipline will turn against us and His judgment will strike us.

Babylon abused her power and showed no mercy to the aged. She has been particularly violent against God's people, much harder than God wanted. There is no thought of God in her, but only self-centered thoughts (verse 7). There is also no thought of the finiteness of her task, but she appropriates everlasting authority. In the exercise of power man shows his true nature. On this only God's judgment can come..

### **Isa 47:8-10 | The Wicked Character of Babylon**

*8 "Now, then, hear this, you sensual one,  
Who dwells securely,  
Who says in your heart,  
'I am, and there is no one besides me.  
I will not sit as a widow,  
Nor know loss of children.'  
9 "But these two things will come on you suddenly in one day:  
Loss of children and widowhood.  
They will come on you in full measure  
In spite of your many sorceries,  
In spite of the great power of your spells.  
10 "You felt secure in your wickedness and said,  
'No one sees me,'  
Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you;  
For you have said in your heart,  
'I am, and there is no one besides me.'*

In these verses the wicked character of Babylon is further described. It is a lascivious, herself-exalting city that has arrogated to herself divine attributes. The statement "I am" (verse 8) can only be made by the LORD, for it applies only to Him (Exo 3:14). In the New Testament it is clear that everything that is said here about Babylon must be applied in our time to apostate Christianity, especially the roman-catholic church (Rev 18:7). She does not feel like a widow, while the true church does. The true church lives in the awareness of the absence of her Husband, the Lord Jesus. She misses Him. After all, He is not visibly present.



The roman-catholic church, however, moderates in the person of the pope that she replaces Christ on earth, that He is present. She does not miss Him. Because of her false presentation of matters she does not take Him into account. In her corruption she wants to exert influence over the whole earth. "For this reason in one day her plagues will come" (Rev 18:8a).

Babylon believes that her sorceries will protect her from disaster (verse 9). The LORD laughs at it and mocks it. Suddenly disaster will strike her. Cyrus has gradually taken the land, but the city has fallen in one day and she has lost everything: husband, children and glory.

In her foolishness she also thinks that nobody sees her (verse 10). Once again she says in her moderation that she possesses divine qualities: "I am."

#### **Isa 47:11-15 | Evil Can Be Repelled by Nothing**

11 *"But evil will come on you  
Which you will not know how to charm away;  
And disaster will fall on you  
For which you cannot atone;  
And destruction about which you do not know  
Will come on you suddenly.*

12 *"Stand [fast] now in your spells  
And in your many sorceries  
With which you have labored from your youth;  
Perhaps you will be able to profit,  
Perhaps you may cause trembling.*

13 *"You are wearied with your many counsels;  
Let now the astrologers,  
Those who prophesy by the stars,  
Those who predict by the new moons,  
Stand up and save you from what will come upon you.*

14 *"Behold, they have become like stubble,  
Fire burns them;  
They cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame;  
There will be no coal to warm by  
[Nor] a fire to sit before!*

15 *"So have those become to you with whom you have labored,  
Who have trafficked with you from your youth;  
Each has wandered in his own way;  
There is none to save you.*

She is so full of herself that she has completely banished the thought of the omnipresent God from Whom nothing is hidden. She imagines her natural wisdom and knowledge so great, that she does not realize that she is blind and that her own wisdom and knowledge lead her to these follies. Therefore, an evil will come upon her of which she has no suspicion and against which no spell will help (Dan 5:30). All her sorceries will prove to be useless (verse 11).

The LORD mocks it (verse 12; cf. 1Kgs 18:26-27). After all, she has practiced black magic for so long. He says: 'Then let's see what it is worth, perhaps it will frighten Me. If not, let the astrologers tell her how to escape disaster (verse 13). Surely they claim that they can read the future from the position of the stars and deliver the horoscope every month?' How many people read in it regularly and attribute a certain value to it?

Babylon is a city of people practicing the dark practices of spiritism. The city relies on that too. The city is the home basis of idolatry, of the worship of demonic powers. This is also true of Babylon in the future, the roman-catholic church, in which we can also involve the liberal professing Christianity: "And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird"" (Rev 18:2).

Let it be clear: they are all like stubbles that the fire burns (verse 14). The fire of hell is their share. It is a fire that serves to suffer in it forever. That is what happens when you do not turn to the one and true God, but follow your own way of error (cf. Isa 53:6a). Then there is no one who saves. All traders will go back to their own places and leave Babylon to her fate (verse 15).

## Isaiah 48

### **Isa 48:1-2 | Confession of Israel**

*1 "Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are named Israel  
And who came forth from the loins of Judah,  
Who swear by the name of the LORD  
And invoke the God of Israel,  
[But] not in truth nor in righteousness.  
2 "For they call themselves after the holy city  
And lean on the God of Israel;  
The LORD of hosts is His name.*

This chapter is especially addressed to the prisoners of Judah, "who came forth from the loins of Judah", that is, those who have their source, their origin, in Judah (verse 1). It indicates their natural ancestry. Judah means 'praise' (Gen 49:8), which indicates the purpose of their existence in the presence God: a people who praise God. They have a great confession – they "are named Israel," which means "warrior of God" (Gen 32:28) – but their ways are not consistent with that. They swear "by the name of the LORD" and call Him "the God of Israel", but they are untruthful in this.

They boast of being of "the holy city" (verse 2), but they behave unholy. They do not think that they are dealing with "the LORD of hosts", a Name that demands reverence and submission and not an outward religion. The apostle Paul later writes: "They are not all Israel who are [descended] from Israel" (Rom 9:6b). The same unfortunately also applies to many Christians who have been baptized and attend church meetings, but are not born again and therefore do not have a personal relationship with the living God.

### **Isa 48:3-11 | Former and New Things**

*3 "I declared the former things long ago  
And they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed them.  
Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.*

4 *"Because I know that you are obstinate,  
And your neck is an iron sinew  
And your forehead bronze,  
5 Therefore I declared [them] to you long ago,  
Before they took place I proclaimed [them] to you,  
So that you would not say, 'My idol has done them,  
And my graven image and my molten image have commanded them.'*  
6 *"You have heard; look at all this.  
And you, will you not declare it?  
I proclaim to you new things from this time,  
Even hidden things which you have not known.  
7 "They are created now and not long ago;  
And before today you have not heard them,  
So that you will not say, 'Behold, I knew them.'*  
8 *"You have not heard, you have not known.  
Even from long ago your ear has not been open,  
Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously;  
And you have been called a rebel from birth.  
9 "For the sake of My name I delay My wrath,  
And [for] My praise I restrain [it] for you,  
In order not to cut you off.  
10 "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;  
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.  
11 "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act;  
For how can [My name] be profaned?  
And My glory I will not give to another.*

Now follows a renewed explanation of the might God alone has to proclaim future things without failure (verses 3-6a). But there is a difference with earlier explanations of this unique feature of God. In earlier statements (Isa 41:22; 42:9; 43:9) that statement is in contrast to the idols and idolaters in Israel (Isa 46:9-10). Here it concerns the prophecy of the LORD in view of the apostasy and hardening of Israel.

He has declared and proclaimed that He will bring salvation (verse 3). But the people did not want to bow their necks to obey Him. There is no place for Him in their minds (verse 4). If He, while the people are in such a state,

would accomplish the announced salvation, it could still happen that the people would attribute it to the idols of Babylon (verse 5).

What is an encouragement for the faithful, that He will redeem them, is a warning for the stubborn. God tells the stubborn what He is going to do so that they will not think to attribute the redemption to the idols. He guards for His honor. He wants them to acknowledge that it is He Who does it (verse 6a).

Furthermore, the LORD will show them things He creates new, not things He created a long time ago (verses 6b-8). Man is so evil, that he can misuse the knowledge God gives him of what He is going to do in order to attribute what He does to the idols. These new things relate to the deliverance of Israel from the power of Babylon. He will work this suddenly.

The LORD says all this because He knows the heart of His people. If He had given His people the wages they deserve, He would have destroyed them. But He cannot deny His mercy. For the sake of Himself He has subdued them and has not exterminated them (verse 9). The severe exile, as well as the still future great tribulation and the present bitter experiences, are a purifying process (verse 10). He has “refined” them, “but not as silver”, for their value far exceeds that of silver.

The exile has purified them of idolatry. But since their hearts were not cleansed, they rejected Christ. The house of Israel is empty and swept and decorated, where the demon of idolatry will return with “seven other spirits more wicked than itself” (Mt 12:43-45). Israel must be cleansed of these too. For this purpose God sends the great tribulation. The price of salvation must also be paid. Paying that price is what the LORD has announced as new things in this section. That will be explained in the next part, Isaiah 49-57.

This gracious purpose is what the Lord has in mind in the trials we face. It will enable us to appreciate and praise His love and grace that we experience in them. We will then be kept from despair. He only wants to remove all the ‘slugs’, the dirt, from our life of faith and make our faith, which is compared to gold, pure gold (1Pet 1:7; Zec 13:9).

This refining process will come to an end and show a blessed result. He will do it “for My own sake, for My own sake”, the repetition underlining

the great importance of this fact (verse 11). And what will He do? He will deliver His people. The opponents of the LORD and His people will never find any ground to taunt God and His actions. His ways and His actions constitute His glory which will never be given up. To Him all honor will only belong and be given.

### **Isa 48:12-16 | The LORD in His Absolute Godhead**

*12 "Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called;*

*I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.*

*13 "Surely My hand founded the earth,*

*And My right hand spread out the heavens;*

*When I call to them, they stand together.*

*14 "Assemble, all of you, and listen!*

*Who among them has declared these things?*

*The LORD loves him; he will carry out His good pleasure on Babylon,*

*And His arm [will be against] the Chaldeans.*

*15 "I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him,*

*I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful.*

*16 "Come near to Me, listen to this:*

*From the first I have not spoken in secret,*

*From the time it took place, I was there.*

*And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit."*

A second time the people are called to listen (verse 12; verse 1), and also a third and a fourth time (verses 14,16). At His second call the LORD introduces Himself in His absolute Godhead. He is "I am", the Eternal, the Unchanging (Isa 41:4; 44:6). What is said here of the LORD is also said of Christ (Rev 1:8,17; 22:13) and reaffirms that the Lord Jesus is God. He is "the first", which means that He is at the beginning of history. He is also "the last", which means that He is still there at the end of history.

He also points to His impressive power as Creator (verse 13). Christ is the Creator (Col 1:16; Jn 1:3; Heb 1:2). He is the God Who brings about everything. Thus, with His word of power, God is directing all of history and leads it to its consummation in Christ.

His third call to the people to listen is linked to the power with which He controls events (verses 14-15). Who among all the idols is equal to Him in this? They have not been able to predict it and even less to edit it. He loves Cyrus for the work he will do for Him. With this He points again to the Lord Jesus and His work. Cyrus has been called by the LORD as the destroyer of Babylon and He will make his way prosperous.

Here we see Cyrus again as a type of the Lord Jesus. We recognize the love of God for Cyrus in the love of God the Father for His Son, which is clearly described in the Gospel according to John (Jn 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23-26). Just as Cyrus judged Babylon at the time and made Israel return to his own land, so the Lord Jesus Christ will judge Babylon of the end time and save the believing remnant of Israel.

The fourth time He tells the people to listen is because He, as God, has proven His power to predict and fulfill future things (verse 16a). God has always done this in a clear and open way, in contrast to the indistinct mutterings and whispers of the idols.

The “Me” mentioned in verse 16b is different from the “Me” in the first part of the verse. In the first line it is about God and that is always the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The last line of verse 16 suddenly introduces the Servant of the LORD speaking, that is Christ. That Christ is speaking can be concluded from a comparison with the first verse of Isaiah 61 (Isa 61:1).

This conclusion provides another striking proof of the trinity of God (cf. Isa 6:8). There is talk of the LORD, that is God Whom we may know as Father, of “Me”, that is the Servant, and of the Spirit. Also in Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 42 we find the three Persons of the Godhead: the LORD, the Servant, and the Spirit (Isa 11:2; 42:1). The words of the Servant are undoubtedly an introduction to what He will explain about Himself in the next chapter (Isa 49:5-6).

### **Isa 48:17-19 | Listening to Spirit and Word**

*17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,  
“I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit,  
Who leads you in the way you should go.*

18 *"If only you had paid attention to My commandments!  
Then your well-being would have been like a river,  
And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.  
19 "Your descendants would have been like the sand,  
And your offspring like its grains;  
Their name would never be cut off or destroyed from My presence."*

The LORD, Who prepared everything for the deliverance of His people through Cyrus, sent His Servant (verse 16b), Who acts through the Holy Spirit to effect a great redemption for His people (verse 17). He wants to teach them, to give them insight in the way they are going, that it will go well for them, that they may enter that way with joy and confidence.

It is as if we hear the Lord Jesus say to His disciples "learn from Me" (Mt 11:29), that they will have rest in their hearts in the most difficult circumstances. He who is willing to be taught by Him will do well. That it will go well with them is the purpose of the LORD for His people in all the trials and bitter experiences they will have in exile.

This is the merciful purpose of the chastisements God gives us. He gives them "for [our] good, so that we may share His holiness" (Heb 12:10). This is not just guidance in itself, but disciplinary action that teaches us. Therefore, we will stop doing what is of no use and we will put our wandering feet on the path to the goal: conformity to His Son (Rom 8:28-29).

Therefore, the urgent appeal follows to have a listening and obedient ear (verse 18). The words "if you only" are an emotional utterance of the LORD, a heart cry (cf. Deu 5:28-29), which we also hear from the Savior's mouth in relation with Jerusalem (Lk 19:41-42). He is so eager to give well-being or peace to His people, a well-being or peace that flows like a river. Well-being or peace and true prosperity depend on a repentant heart and faith that accepts and obeys the Word of God.

Peace is compared with the peaceful flow of a river, righteousness with the mighty waves of the sea, and descendants and offspring with the abundance of sand and grains (verse 19). This will be a reality in the realm of peace. His peace and righteousness are their portion there.

What Israel as a nation will experience, we may enjoy spiritually. Spiritual fertility depends on peace and righteousness. If we live by His Word, His



peace will fill our hearts and nothing can take away our peace of mind (Phil 4:6-7).

### **Isa 48:20-21 | Separation From Evil**

*20 Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans!  
 Declare with the sound of joyful shouting, proclaim this,  
 Send it out to the end of the earth;  
 Say, "The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob."  
 21 They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts.  
 He made the water flow out of the rock for them;  
 He split the rock and the water gushed forth.*

To live in that peace, separation from evil is an essential condition (verse 20; Isa 52:11). The people must leave Babylon. It is not only a departure, but also a runaway. It is also about an inner detachment from Babylon and not merely an outward departure. All the years in Babylon have tainted them internally in many cases.

We recognize this in the books of Ezra and of Nehemiah. That is why through the prophets Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi sounds the call to inner conversion, to spiritually flee from Babylon. This is also the call to the believers in our time regarding the church as an institution where people dominate over others.

We live in the midst of a professing Christianity defiled by erroneous doctrine and moral evils that proliferate like a cancerous tumor. Therefore, within the religious confusion, we must separate ourselves from what is not according to the will and honor of the Lord (Rev 18:4). It is also good to remember that deliverance is the result of separation and that that separation is accompanied by the sound of joyful shouting and joyful testimony.

Israel is instructed to let the good news of their deliverance be heard "to the end of the earth". This the God-fearing remnant will do in the coming day. Until then, the worldwide testimony of the gospel has been entrusted to us. We see the elements of the gospel in the water flow out of the rock for the thirsty (verse 21). This water is made freely available to all (Isa 55:1; Rev 22:17b). It is the water that Christ gives (Jn 4:10,13-14), while He Himself is also the rock (1Cor 10:4).

## **Isa 48:22 | No Peace for the Wicked**

| 22 *"There is no peace for the wicked," says the LORD.*

This part of the prophecy of Isaiah, Isaiah 40-48, ends with the serious declaration of the LORD that there is no peace for the wicked. The peace of the obedient (verse 18) is unknown to the wicked. Peace is the result of obedience (Jn 14:15,21,23,27). It seems to be an anticlimax, but Isaiah does not lose sight of the reality when speaking about salvation and the glorious things associated with it. He refers to the wicked in Israel. It is the people who are indifferent to the will of God, a condition that prevents them from experiencing peace and receiving the blessings promised to the righteous in verse 18 (cf. Rev 22:14-15).

This statement is repeated, with a small variation, at the end of Isaiah 57 as the conclusion of the next part (Isaiah 49-57). In more detail we find this statement at the end of the book, at the end of Isaiah 66, as a conclusion of the last part (Isaiah 58-66).

Here this statement concludes the testimony concerning Babylon that began in Isaiah 46:1 and more generally the whole part Isaiah 40-48. In the remainder of the book there is no mention of Cyrus or Babylon or of the idolatry that was the subject of the LORD's protest. In the next part (Isaiah 49-57) it is not about the first great sin of Israel, idolatry, but about the second great sin of Israel, the rejection of Christ, the true Servant of the LORD.

## **Isaiah 49**

### **Introduction**

#### **Overview main part 2.2 – Isaiah 49-57**

#### **The Gospel of the Servant of the LORD**

The second part of the second main part (Isaiah 40-66) contains Isaiah 49-57 and can be divided as follows:

1. The servant of the LORD and the restoration of Israel (Isaiah 49:1-26).
2. Israel's sin and the obedience of the Servant (Isaiah 50:1-11)
3. Listen! Awake! (Isaiah 51:1-23)
4. Depart! (Isaiah 52:1-52:12)
5. The Man of sorrows and His justification (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)
6. God's glorious future for Jerusalem (Isaiah 54:1-17)
7. Effectiveness of God's Word of grace (Isaiah 55:1-13)
8. Salvation extended to the wronged (Isaiah 56:1-8)
9. God's message for the wicked (Isaiah 56:9-57:21)

#### **Introduction on Isaiah 49**

The purpose of the second main part of Isaiah (Isaiah 40-66) is the work of God in the heart of His people to work conversion. Only then God can cause the remnant to return and redeem them.

In the first part (Isaiah 40-48) of this second main part the contrast between God and the idols is extensively painted. This will effect a total condemnation of idolatry in the hearts of the remnant, especially with regard to the idolatry that will become public under the antichrist in the time of the great tribulation.

In the second part (Isaiah 49-57), the eyes of the remnant, like the eyes of Saul of Tarsus, are opened to the suffering of Christ, Whom they persecuted and rejected. They will look on Him Whom they have pierced (Zec 12:10; Rev 1:7). This, as with Saul, will bring about a total turn. They will

mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son (Zec 12:10b). They will humble themselves.

Just like the brothers of Joseph who recognize and acknowledge their ‘brother’ as viceroy of Egypt, they will accept Christ. We will recognize this in the coming chapters, with Isaiah 53 as the climax. After the restoration of Israel we then see the blessings for Israel (Isaiah 54), and then hear how the nations are called to join Israel to share in the blessings of the kingdom (Isaiah 55-57).

We have in this chapter, Isaiah 49, the second of four prophecies or songs about the Servant of the LORD. The previous prophecy (Isaiah 42) is about the Servant as the Chosen One. Here it is about Him as the Rejected One.

This chapter has two subjects: the testimony of the Servant of the LORD, Who He is (verses 1-13), and the comforting promise for the desperate Zion (verses 14-26). There is a renewed connection of Israel as the servant of the LORD with Christ as the perfect Servant of the LORD. Israel cannot be in that relationship as the servant of the LORD apart from the identification with the true Servant Christ as their Messiah because of His atoning and redeeming work on Calvary.

The need for repentance before restoration is possible, even after 2,000 years, shows that sin never expires. Likewise, after so many years, Joseph’s brothers had to repent before the blessings could come and their relationship with their rejected brother, who was now viceroy, could be restored. This repentance only became apparent at the moment that for them the feelings of their father were more important than their own well-being.

So it is with the people of Israel now. Before the promised blessings of God for these people can be given by Him, they must first come to terms with God regarding the sin that they have rejected Christ. They also need to see what that sin means to God. Then all of a sudden they will discover that Christ on the cross blotted out their sins, just as Joseph’s brothers discovered that through their rejection of him, God used him and sent him to save a great people (Gen 45:5; 50:20).

### **Isa 49:1-7 | The Servant of the LORD**

| 1 *Listen to Me, O islands,*

And pay attention, you peoples from afar.  
 The LORD called Me from the womb;  
 From the body of My mother He named Me.  
 2 He has made My mouth like a sharp sword,  
 In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me;  
 And He has also made Me a select arrow,  
 He has hidden Me in His quiver.  
 3 He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel,  
 In Whom I will show My glory."  
 4 But I said, "I have toiled in vain,  
 I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity;  
 Yet surely the justice [due] to Me is with the LORD,  
 And My reward with My God."  
 5 And now says the LORD, who formed Me  
 from the womb to be His Servant,  
 To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him  
 (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD,  
 And My God is My strength),  
 6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant  
 To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;  
 I will also make You a light of the nations  
 So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."  
 7 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel [and] its Holy One,  
 To the despised One,  
 To the One abhorred by the nation,  
 To the Servant of rulers,  
 "Kings will see and arise,  
 Princes will also bow down,  
 Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy  
 One of Israel who has chosen You."

This section is about the good news, not primarily for Israel, but for the nations (verse 1; verse 6). They are called to listen with the call "listen to Me" (verse 1; cf. Isa 46:3,12). It is the task of the people of Israel as the servant of the LORD to bring the salvation of God to the nations in the distance. Israel is called (Isa 51:2) as the servant of the LORD to proclaim His praise (Isa

43:21) to the nations (Rom 2:17-20). In this, however, Israel has failed miserably (Rom 2:24). The LORD calls out about this servant: "Who is blind but My servant, or so deaf as My messenger whom I send? (Isa 42:19a).

Like Adam, the first man, Israel failed as son, servant and vine. But then God sends the Lord Jesus. He is the last Adam and the second Man (1Cor 15:45-47), the true Son whom He called out of Egypt (Mt 2:15), the true Servant (Isa 42:1; 49:3,5,6,7; 50:10; 53:11) and the true Vine (Jn 15:1).

The Calling One here is the true Servant of the LORD, the Messiah, Who with Divine authority calls the nations to hear. The Called One in the second part of verse 1 also refers to the Lord Jesus, the true Servant, Who has come in the place of Israel. Here we see the wonder of His Person which we do not understand. He is truly God and truly Man. He is God from eternity, Who in the time determined by God has become Man.

His Name is called by the LORD "from the womb". His Name is not mentioned here, but only just before and just after He is conceived. Then it is said to both Joseph and Mary that the Son Who is to be born must be given the name Jesus (Mt 1:21; Lk 1:35).

Christ is called to bring salvation for His people and also for the nations. He does this by using the sword of the Word of God (verse 2; Eph 6:17; Mt 10:34). His mouth is a sharp sword that is inconspicuous, but always ready to use to judge anything that is contrary to the will of God. The Pharisees and Sadducees have experienced the sharpness of His words. He grew up in the shadow of God's hand, under His protection. Like a selected arrow, God has hidden Him in His quiver. The time to defeat His enemies had not yet come.

The identification of Christ with Israel appears in verse 3. The LORD will glorify Himself in Christ as the true Israel (cf. Jn 13:31-32). The true Servant takes the place of the failing Israel and gives the Israel of God its true meaning. It is the same with Israel that failed as a vine (Isa 5:1-7), for which the Lord Jesus became the true vine instead (Jn 15:1). Israel as a vine has given in Him his true fruit to God.

In view of the bitter experiences that will precede the time of glory for Israel, the time when God will glorify Himself in His people in Christ, verse 4 contains an expression of what looks like great dejection. Here the

rejection of Christ is foretold (Jn 1:11). For a moment it looks as if this Servant too has been toiling in vain. Yet it is not an expression of unbelief or despair, for the heart immediately expresses the certainty of the truth that all justice is in God's hand (cf. Mt 11:20-24; Mt 11:25-30).

The service we do often seems to have little or no result. To the fruitlessness are added extremely difficult circumstances and trials that can weigh down our hearts as an enormous burden. If Satan could carry out his intention, he would use everything to throw us down in desperation to make us stop doing our work. Then we have here a section that is meant by the Spirit to lead us to consider all circumstances in the light of all God's wise counsels.

The result will be that in the midst of the battle we will be encouraged to share in what He has in mind. We will then know that our justice is with Him. If we are aware of that, we may, like the Lord Jesus, entrust everything "to Him who judges righteously" (1Pet 2:23b). Then we may trust that with Him is the reward for our seemingly fruitless work.

The language of verse 5 and what follows is clearly that of the Messiah, Who here gives testimony of the purpose for which He is Servant of the LORD. It is clear that the servant here is not Israel, for the Servant's task here is precisely to restore Jacob, the failing servant (Rom 15:8; Mt 15:24). Only Christ can do the work of bringing back and gathering to Him. This work is particularly pleasing to the Father Who honors Him for it. He did not receive that honor from the people.

There is also a purpose that goes even further. This is written in verse 6. The joyful heart of the LORD looks forward to a worldwide blessing. When Israel has rejected the Servant, He will receive much more, while also the blessing for Israel is not definitively lost, but will come. The bringing back of Jacob will happen by delivering the people from Babylon and by what will happen in the end time. The raising up of "the tribes of Jacob" means the restoration of all twelve tribes in the land. In the end time this also means the restoration of the ten tribes realm after the great tribulation.

"And to restore the preserved ones of Israel" means that the remnant of the two tribes, the Jews, will repent. They have rejected Christ and they will take the first place in the restoration. We see that in picture in the history

of Joseph with Judah, who took a prominent place both in the rejection of Joseph and in the restoration of relations with Joseph (Gen 37:26-27; 44:18-34).

Verse 6 also applies to the work of the gospel to be preached by the command of the Lord throughout the world, to the ends of the earth. Thus Paul applies this verse for today (Acts 13:46-47). Grace cannot be stopped, nor can running water. That water, if stopped, will take a different course and go somewhere else.

Thus the grace of God, rejected by Israel, now flows to the nations. The full fulfillment will happen in the realm of peace through Christ Who will be “A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Your people Israel” (Lk 2:32). By being a light to the nations, the Servant will fulfill the task of Israel to be a blessing in this world.

In verse 7 we are reminded again of the time of humiliation of the Servant. The LORD speaks a word directly to Him. His humiliation is the necessary basis to bring about the work of saving grace. That is why He is called “the despised One” (cf. Isa 53:3). The people have abhorred Him and treated Him like that. As “the Servant of rulers” the Lord Jesus has identified Himself with His people because that people are also subject to foreign rulers as a servant (Neh 9:36-37). There is a difference, however, because they are subject because of their unfaithfulness to their God, while Christ has subjected Himself voluntarily.

Thus, in the days of His flesh, Christ subjected Himself to the Roman rulers and religious rulers and surrendered Himself to their will. He seems to be the great Loser, but the result of all this will be seen in the coming glory. Then rulers will “see and arise” and “bow down” before Him Who once made Himself their Servant. They will discover Who it is Whom they have brought to the cross. Verse 7 is a preparation for what we will encounter in the third and fourth prophecy about the servant of the LORD.

### **Isa 49:8-13 | Delivered and on Their Way to Their Land**

*8 Thus says the LORD,  
“In a favorable time I have answered You,  
And in a day of salvation I have helped You;*



*And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people,  
 To restore the land, to make [them] inherit the desolate heritages;  
 9 Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,'  
 To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.'  
 Along the roads they will feed,  
 And their pasture [will be] on all bare heights.  
 10 "They will not hunger or thirst,  
 Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down;  
 For He who has compassion on them will lead them  
 And will guide them to springs of water.  
 11 "I will make all My mountains a road,  
 And My highways will be raised up.  
 12 "Behold, these will come from afar;  
 And lo, these [will come] from the north and from the west,  
 And these from the land of Sinim."  
 13 Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth!  
 Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains!  
 For the LORD has comforted His people  
 And will have compassion on His afflicted.*

Verse 8 tells how the LORD has answered the prayer of His Servant when He is in humility among His people and He has offered up to Him "both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears" (Heb 5:7). When God raises Him from the dead, it is "a favorable time". This word is applied by Paul to the believers (2Cor 6:1-2), through which we perceive here in veiled terms the relationship between Christ and His church, which may share in the blessings of the new covenant. Those who share His rejection may draw comfort from this promise of a favorable time while living in a time of rejection.

Because Christ has identified Himself with Israel, these words will also become true for the people who, in their restored state, are in fellowship with Him. The fact that Christ has been made "a covenant of the people" points to the new covenant that will soon be made with Israel. That covenant is new and better because it is based on the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross and rests on the power of His shed blood, the blood of the new covenant.

“The desolate heritages” point to the devastation that Israel will endure as a result of the invasion of the king of the North, or the alliance of Arab nations. That which has been destroyed will be restored, they will “inherit” it again. Each tribe of the people will regain its inheritance (Lev 25:8-13; Eze 47:13-14; 48:29). Prisoners in exile will be delivered and restored to their land. There they will manifest themselves as His people (verse 9a).

The verses that follow give a wonderful description of the consequences of the second coming of Christ. These consequences go far beyond anything that takes place at the return to the land under the command of Cyrus. The people are painted as a herd returning home and finding pasture on the way (verse 9b). They will have enough food on their journey home without having to go far to find food. They will not be hungry or thirsty and will not suffer from the heat (verse 10). All this is because the LORD is “He who has compassion” Who will lead them personally.

On their return from all parts of the world, their journeys will be marked by the fact that they will not encounter insurmountable obstacles and difficulties (verse 11). The LORD speaks emphatically of “*My mountains*” and “*My ways*”. They are His creation and therefore He can make a change in them in a way that everything will favor the return of His people and make them prosperous.

We can also apply this to our current experiences. The mountains of difficulties we face on our pilgrim path can become heights of fellowship with God and of joyful fellowship with His people. This will be so if we trust the Lord with all our heart and entrust our whole being to Him for the fulfillment of His will.

In the coming day, Israel will be gathered from all parts of the world to the earthly center assigned to them (verse 12). By “the west” can be meant Western Europe and the United States of America as well as areas in Africa. “These from the land of Sinim” are believed to be inhabitants of China. This prospect of such a vast and general gathering causes a call to shout for joy (verse 13). Everything and everyone, heaven, earth and mountains, must come to an outburst of joy over what the LORD has done for His people.

**Isa 49:14-16 | The LORD Does Not Forget His People**

*14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me,  
And the Lord has forgotten me."*

*15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child  
And have no compassion on the son of her womb?  
Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.*

*16 "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms [of My hands];  
Your walls are continually before Me.*

It seems as if the people can't believe all this. They complain that the LORD forsook them in the time of tribulation that precedes the return described above. The lengthy period of suffering has given the people that feeling (verse 14). The tribulation is just, their complaint is not. To comfort them the complaint is followed by an exposition and assurance of God's love. That love is not only as great as a mother's love for her child, but goes far beyond that (verse 15). That a mother forgets her nursing child is hard to imagine; that the LORD forgets His people is totally unimaginable.

Far from forgetting Zion – i.e. her inhabitants – He has them inseparably attached to Himself and stands as guarantor for them with His actions (verse 16). The Jews had a habit of putting the mark of the city and the temple in their hands or anywhere else as a sign of their dedication and as a constant reminder. God takes over this picture in His grace to give them security. He engraved them in the palms of His hands.

With one hand He founded the earth (Isa 48:13), but He surrounded His beloved people with both His hands (cf. Jn 10:28-29). It speaks both of absolute assurance, safety and security and of the fact that He is constantly at work for them. Those hands were once pierced for us when He was crucified. It speaks of perfect love. We may think of that every time He shows us His hands (Jn 20:19-29).

In ancient times it was customary to engrave the name of the master in the hand of his slaves. The slave was thereby inseparably connected to his master. Here it is the other way around. God inextricably connected Himself to them. He thinks of them incessantly and is always busy for them. They should not think that things are getting out of hand with Him, because they are always in His hands. The walls of Zion, no matter how

destroyed they are by the enemy, He always sees before Him in their perfect, future state.

Being engraved in the palms of the hands presupposes the closest union with Him Himself. It indicates His unchanging love and His constant thinking of us in everything He feels and does. Engraving in the palm of the hand is also an extremely painful thing. He endured the pain on the cross to unite us with Himself in this way.

In all His actions He thinks of each and every one of His own. In our unbelief and forgetfulness, we often lose sight of how precious we are to Him in Christ. God's love finds its fullness in the love of Christ. We hear that love when He opens His heart about this to His disciples. He says to them: "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love" (Jn 15:9).

#### **Isa 49:17-21 | Amazement**

17 *"Your builders hurry;  
Your destroyers and devastators  
Will depart from you.*

18 *"Lift up your eyes and look around;  
All of them gather together, they come to you.  
As I live," declares the LORD,  
"You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride.*

19 *"For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land—  
Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants,  
And those who swallowed you will be far away.*

20 *"The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears,  
'The place is too cramped for me;  
Make room for me that I may live [here].'*

21 *"Then you will say in your heart,  
'Who has begotten these for me,  
Since I have been bereaved of my children  
And am barren, an exile and a wanderer?  
And who has reared these?  
Behold, I was left alone;  
From where did these come?'"*

These verses reaffirm the promise of the final gathering together of the scattered rejected ones of the people back in their land. A change of population takes place. The original population enters the land with hurry, and those who have conquered and destroyed the land depart (verse 17). The children of whom Zion thought they were lost come back in crowds (verse 18). They will be like a decoration for the land, in the same way as a bride is decorated for her husband.

The reason, indicated by “for” (verse 19), that the devourers are driven far away is that there will not be enough room for all its inhabitants. There will be so many people that room must be made for them (verse 20). The people of Zion have gone into exile, the city has been deserted and left alone (verse 21). Now she is surrounded by a crowd of her children. With the “exiled” children the two tribes are meant, and with the “wandering” children the ten tribes. Amazed, she wonders where they have been and where they come from. The answer is given in the following verses.

Sometimes the Lord does not reveal the purpose of His actions. He tests our faith in this and makes us wait until the time determined by Him has come to make His actions and their meaning known. The joy is much greater when the unfolding comes, than when there would not have been dark circumstances. The glory of His grace will also be much greater.

### **Isa 49:22-23 | Those Who Hopefully Wait for the LORD**

22 *Thus says the Lord GOD,  
 “Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations  
 And set up My standard to the peoples;  
 And they will bring your sons in [their] bosom,  
 And your daughters will be carried on [their] shoulders.*  
 23 *“Kings will be your guardians,  
 And their princesses your nurses.  
 They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth  
 And lick the dust of your feet;  
 And [you] will know that I am the LORD;  
 Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame.*

From verse 22 to the end of the chapter the LORD answers the astonished questions of Zion which arose in the preceding verse. He shows how the crowds of scattered Israelites will be delivered from their exile and from those who oppressed them, and how He will bring them into their land. This cannot be about the return of a small remnant from the Babylonian exile. Also, it is not only about an outward return to the land, but also about an inward turning to the LORD through faith in the Redeemer. What is described here will take place in the end time.

The LORD will use the nations to participate in carrying out this gathering of His people. For this purpose He will lift up His hand (verse 22). The lifting up of His hand presupposes a certain sign through which the nations know what to do. The lifting up of a banner is more common in Isaiah (Isa 5:26; 11:10,12; 18:3; 62:10). It has to do with battle. When He lifts up His banner, it is about a battle with which He has to deal and at the same time the outcome is certain.

The nations will bring back the sons and daughters in their arms and on their shoulders. Kings and princesses will devote themselves to the care of God's people (verse 23). Those who are themselves objects of honor will pay homage to these people. They will not act as generous benefactors, but will subject themselves to this people to the dust, which will be a total reversal of the situation. They will be forced into this service of cleansing the feet. For us, we follow the example of the washing of the feet by the Lord Jesus and wash each other's feet as He did with His disciples (Jn 13:1-17). It means that we will serve each other in humility.

The rulers of the world used to humiliate these people to the dust, but now they are humiliated to the dust (Mic 7:17). So deep the enemies will bow down before the Messiah (Psa 72:9), revealing again how closely the people are connected to their Messiah. Israel should have been a blessing for the nations. When they eventually will be, the nations will be used by the LORD to bless Israel.

In all this Zion will acknowledge the LORD and His ways. They will discover the great comfort that those who hopefully wait for the LORD will not be ashamed. This is more negative, while Isaiah 40 is more positive, where 'strength' is connected to waiting (Isa 40:31). This is the exercise of

patience, perseverance in the midst of difficulties and opposition, until the time of the LORD to deliver has come.

For now we expect it *from Him* in prayer. We wait *for Him* for the future. In doing so, we may be confident that the present circumstances of trial and sorrow will change into joy and will be characterized by peace. This change can only take place through the direct and public intervention of the Lord Himself.

### Isa 49:24-26 | The LORD: Their Savior and Redeemer

24 *"Can the prey be taken from the mighty man,  
Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?"*

25 *Surely, thus says the LORD,*

*"Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away,  
And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued;  
For I will contend with the one who contends with you,  
And I will save your sons.*

26 *"I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh,  
And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine;  
And all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior  
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."*

These verses are about the tyrants with all their power and evil intentions. The rhetorical question in verse 24 has two parts. The first part, taking the prey from the mighty man is not only about Babylon, but also applies in the future to the Assyrian, the king of the North, and to the two beasts of Revelation 13 (Rev 13:1-10,11-18).

The second part, the rescue of the captives, is not about lawful prisoners, but about those who belong to the LORD and will in the future be torn out of the hand of the antichrist, who, under the influence of satan, is out to kill the faithful. They are also those who are the remnant of the lost ten tribes and who will then be given back by the nations.

The assurance is given that the LORD Himself will take care of this (verse 25). This will happen when the Lord Jesus appears for the second time. Then the entire world will discover and acknowledge that the LORD is the "Savior" and "Redeemer" of Israel, "the Mighty One of Jacob" (verse 26).

All attempts of the United Nations to establish peace and security on earth, no matter how good the intentions, are doomed to fail. The last great battle in the world, in which the Jewish question will be the central issue, will make the fulfillment of the Scriptures clear. That fulfillment is that righteousness can only be established on earth through the personal coming of Christ in judgment on God's enemies and in the deliverance of His people.



## Isaiah 50

### Isa 50:1-3 | Questions of the LORD

*1 Thus says the LORD,  
“Where is the certificate of divorce  
By which I have sent your mother away?  
Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you?  
Behold, you were sold for your iniquities,  
And for your transgressions your mother was sent away.  
2 “Why was there no man when I came?  
When I called, [why] was there none to answer?  
Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom?  
Or have I no power to deliver?  
Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke,  
I make the rivers a wilderness;  
Their fish stink for lack of water  
And die of thirst.  
3 “I clothe the heavens with blackness  
And make sackcloth their covering.”*

This chapter deals with two facts: Israel’s responsibility for their rejection and the steadfastness and faithfulness of the Servant of the LORD. In verse 1 the LORD asks two questions as a protest. They contain the reproach of the thought that what has happened to the people is the result of an arbitrary act of the LORD. But it is not like that. Their condition is due to their own transgressions.

The first question is a denial of the LORD that He has broken the relationship in which He stands with Zion, the mother of Israel. This is the LORD’s answer to Zion’s complaint: “The LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me” (Isa 49:14). He has bound Himself to Zion and she cannot show a certificate of divorce that He has sent her away. If that would have been the case, He would also have taken away the opportunity to take her back to Zion in case she had married someone else (Deu 24:1-4). She went *herself*, she left Him (cf. Jer 31:31-32).

The second question is so far true that the LORD has sold His people to strangers. But that is not because He owes those strangers anything. He knows no creditors. Again it is because of their own iniquities. The LORD is not to blame for their condition. Surely, He has rejected and sold, but it is because His people have obliged Him to do so. Therefore the mother, Zion, suffers because of the depravity of her children. The LORD did give a certificate of divorce to the ten tribes, who had been carried away by the Assyrians long before, and are scattered until now (Jer 3:8).

There are more questions to ask (verse 2). In the beginning God already has come to man with a question when he has fallen into sin (Gen 3:8-9). Later the LORD came to His people in the prophets to make them return to Him (Jer 7:25b-26). But has anyone received them or listened to them?

The questions asked have a prophetic meaning especially in view of the first coming of the Lord Jesus. Here it is foretold that He will not be received by anyone and that no one will answer His call to repentance. This is the attitude of the people as a whole when He comes to them (Jn 1:11). The rejection of the Messiah, not paying attention to Him, filled the measure of their iniquities mentioned in verse 1.

Their confession is that they are waiting for the Messiah. But when He comes, it turns out that they don't want Him. They want Him to deliver them from the yoke of the Romans, but they are not aware of the yoke of their sins from which they must be set free. He calls to gather them to Himself, but at the end of His service He must say, "and you were unwilling" (Mt 23:37).

Only a few disciples follow Him. Is it because, although God offers salvation, He is incapable of working it out and bringing it about? No, for God, and He alone, has the power to save. His hand is really not too short, i.e. without power, to ransom (Isa 59:1)!

Didn't He formerly deliver His people from Egypt by His power? Didn't He by His punishment, that is, by the power of His word, make the Red Sea dry, so that His people could pass through it? Didn't He make the rivers a wasteland in Egypt, so that the fish stank in them and died? Didn't He also make it dark in Egypt (verse 3)? It is clear that the sea, the rivers

and the heavens are all under His command and that He acts with them as He sees fit, also for the benefit of His people.

### Isa 50:4-7 | The Obedient Servant

*4 The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples,  
That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.  
He awakens [Me] morning by morning,  
He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.  
5 The Lord GOD has opened My ear;  
And I was not disobedient  
Nor did I turn back.  
6 I gave My back to those who strike [Me],  
And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard;  
I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.  
7 For the Lord GOD helps Me,  
Therefore, I am not disgraced;  
Therefore, I have set My face like flint,  
And I know that I will not be ashamed.*

Here we come to the third of the four prophecies about the Servant of the LORD (verses 4-9). In the first prophecy (Isaiah 42) we have seen Him as the Chosen One and in the second as the Rejected One (Isaiah 49). In the third we see Him as the dependent Servant, Who is obedient to death, yes, to death on the cross (Phil 2:7-8). This is in contrast to the people where no one is obedient, where no one is listening (verse 2). Now the people are called to follow the example of this perfect Servant and listen to Him.

In this section the names “Lord GOD” (*Adonai Yahweh*) are mentioned four times (verses 4,5,7,9). These names are spoken by the Servant of the LORD. Each time *Adonai* comes first. The name *Adonai* refers to exalted authority and ownership. This name is only used when utter respect must be expressed. Here we see how the Lord of glory takes the place of the perfect Servant and calls the LORD *Adonai*, My Lord and Master.

In verse 4, the words of Christ Himself describe His testimony as the Sent One. The “Me” in this verse is no other Person than the “Me” in the previous verses. It is Christ Who is one with God and has become Man. No

one from the people answered when God called, as it says in verse 2, until He comes. Then there is Someone Who listens when God calls. He speaks about His obedience to Him Who sent Him, of His suffering, and of His justification.

God speaks to the prophets through special and temporal revelations, through visions and dreams. This is different with the Servant of the LORD. Here He unfolds the secret of His inner life in the days of His stay on earth and the secret source of His service and ways. What He says here breathes the joyful humbleness and humiliation of the true Disciple.

He “kept increasing in wisdom” (Lk 2:52). In the days of the fulfillment of this prophecy He says:

“My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me” (Jn 7:16) and:

“I speak these things as the Father taught Me” (Jn 8:28) and:

“I speak the things which I have seen with [My] Father” (Jn 8:38) and:

“The Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment [as to] what to say and what to speak” (Jn 12:49; 14:10,24).

We read in the Gospels how He sustained the weary one with a word. His words are “gracious words” (Lk 4:22). We hear them both in His public service (Mt 11:28) and in the comfort He gives to a widow, to a sick person, to a desperate one and to one threatened by the wind and waves. In the morning, His Father teaches Him about this.

The Lord Jesus always listens to the voice of His Father. He begins the day with that (Mk 1:35) and that is His attitude all day long, He is “prayer” (Psa 109:4b). He is an example to us in this. It is His joy to be able to say: “He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him” (Jn 8:29).

Only if we pay attention to His voice day by day we can fulfill His will and be able to say with the apostle that “we also have as our ambition ... to be pleasing to Him” (2Cor 5:9). This is the key to all service to the Lord. First follow, then be sent.

Verse 5 indicates His perfect obedience. He not only listens, but He also obeys. When the Savior’s ears are spoken of, it has to do with the perfect dedication to the will of the Father. The Lord Jesus knows all the suffer-

ing that will come upon Him, and yet He goes His way to the cross with unwavering steadfastness, without the slightest form of disobedience.

We read of Him that He says to the LORD: "My ears You have opened" (Psa 40:6; cf. Heb 10:5). This indicates that He became Man in order to be able to obey and to die. Here (Isa 50:4) we read that the LORD says: "He awakens My ear." This refers to His life on earth that is also characterized by obedience. Finally, there is also talk of piercing the ear of the Lord Jesus in the picture of the Hebrew slave (Exo 21:5-6). This can be seen at the end of His service and life on earth, which is also characterized by obedience. It also indicates that He will be Slave or Servant forever (Lk 12:37).

Verse 6 refers to what people will do with Him (Mt 26:67; 27:30; Mk 15:19; Lk 22:63). The prophet describes in striking detail what the Lord Jesus endured as a Servant, especially at the end of His service on earth. He endured it without wavering (Lk 9:51), because He knows that God will help Him and that He will not be disgraced and not be ashamed (verse 7). Just as God helped Israel (Isa 43:2,5; 44:2) and Cyrus (Isa 45:1,5), so He will also help His unique Servant. Therefore, the Servant has set His "face like flint" which speaks of His perfect perseverance in dependence. He knows that He will not be ashamed, for He surrenders everything to Him Who judges righteously.

His example is an exhortation for us to imitate when we are called to endure severe opposition, so that we may steadfastly fulfill the task entrusted to us by the Lord. We can never suffer like Him, but our life and testimony can bear the features that have also been with Him in His life on earth.

"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). But suffering for His sake makes everything glorious and joyful (1Pet 4:13-14). He looked to the future with joy (Heb 12:2) and so may we. The Father's purpose is to give us such confidence in Him and the assurance of His help, that we will be free from any tendency to despair under the weight of difficulties. If we walk the path of obedience, we can always be sure of help in this moment and of deliverance and victory in His time and manner.

### Isa 50:8-9 | Confidence

*8 He who vindicates Me is near;  
Who will contend with Me?  
Let us stand up to each other;  
Who has a case against Me?  
Let him draw near to Me.  
9 Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me;  
Who is he who condemns Me?  
Behold, they will all wear out like a garment;  
The moth will eat them.*

The Lord Jesus knows that despite all the accusations of men and spiritual enemies, He will triumphantly be acquitted of every accusation (verse 8). He does not say “He will justify Me”, but “He ... is near” Who will do so. This explains His awareness of the presence of the Father, so as when He stands before Caiaphas and his gang and before Pilate and his soldiers. His vindication takes place in His resurrection (Rom 1:4; 1Tim 3:16).

Then He says for the second time: “The Lord GOD helps Me” (verse 9; verse 7). In contrast to that, all accusations and accusers will wear out like a garment on which a moth has done slowly but thoroughly its destructive work. This fate afflicts all fools and wicked people who see in Him nothing more than a Man Who assumes to be something that He would not be. Only He can say: “Which one of you convicts Me of sin?” (Jn 8:46a). This concludes the Self testimony of the Messiah.

Paul, guided in this by the Holy Spirit, applies the words “who is he who condemns Me” to the believers of our time (Rom 8:33-34). One who is justified in faith is seen as ‘in Christ’. Since no accusation against Him can stand, every believer in Christ is outside of any accusation or condemnation (Rom 8:1).

### Isa 50:10 | Encouragement for the Faithful Believer

*10 Who is among you that fears the LORD,  
That obeys the voice of His servant,  
That walks in darkness and has no light?  
Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*

The chapter begins with a declaration of the LORD and ends with that as well. In these closing words He first addresses Himself in this verse to the believer “that fears the LORD” and “that obeys the voice of His servant”. These two, fearing God and obeying His Word, belong together.

A believer can walk in dark circumstances and have no light and therefore be tempted to become desperate. Sometimes a situation seems hopeless. He can be overwhelmed by a variety of trials. Here then is an enlightening and encouraging message: “Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God”, as the Servant has done. No one has suffered like Him and see how God has finally made it well with Him because the Servant has entrusted His way to Him.

In the same way God will do with everyone who trusts in and relies on Him. True faith is tried and tested faith. It proves its reality in passing a test. God has been greatly found to be a help in distress. Faith not only accepts this as a fact, but learns to rely on God Himself and to experience the power and love of God’s almighty arm. Then darkness turns into light. The heart rejoices in the light of His presence.

### **Isa 50:11 | Threat to the Unbeliever**

*11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire,  
Who encircle yourselves with firebrands,  
Walk in the light of your fire  
And among the brands you have set ablaze.  
This you will have from My hand:  
You will lie down in torment.*

The words of this verse are addressed to unbelievers and their presumptuous self-confidence. They kindle a fire and walk proudly in the light of the flame they have kindled. This is what we see today – and it has been so since the cross – all around us. It will also happen in the future when the antichrist comes. They will want to walk in the light of his fire. After all, he claims to be God. And not only that, but their fire is kindled against the LORD and His Christ.

Divine retribution is the inevitable consequence. They must suffer the consequences of the fire they themselves caused. This suffering comes from

the hand of the LORD, the hand which He extended to them in the Messiah in order to save them, but which was swept away by them. Their activities with all their wickedness and heartlessness are brought to a terrible end and they lie down in torment. What a contrast with the joyful peace of the believer who rests in his God.

In the age in which we live, man has kindled a huge bonfire of which the sparks go in all directions. It is a fire of which 'science' is the fuel. The sparks of human wisdom are seen everywhere, but how quickly they extinguish. Around us, the crowds are intoxicated and poisoned by the innumerable sparks shooting up from the fire of human inventions, which they believe gives light and warmth, while the sparks extinguish a second later.

It is a great privilege for us, as for the faithful of old, to walk in the wonderful light of the gospel. In doing so, we may be filled with confidence in God perfectly revealed in the Lord Jesus.



## Isaiah 51

### **Introduction**

The subject of this chapter is the call to the faithful remnant to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus. They believe in the LORD and tremble at His word (Isa 66:2), but do not see that the Lord Jesus is their promised Christ, Messiah. Just as the conscience of the brothers of Joseph has been awakened by and during their stay in prison, so the conscience of this faithful remnant will be awakened.

For this purpose God uses three things we find in this chapter:

1. His word (verses 1-8 in which they are called three times to listen).
2. The tribulation by the beast coming up out of the sea and the beast coming up out of the earth (verses 9-16; Rev 13:1-10; Rev 13:11-18).
3. The Assyrians, the king of the North (verses 17-23).

The subject continues until Isaiah 52:12 and can be divided into seven sections. Each of these sections starts with an imperative, which is pronounced twice from the fourth section.

1. "Listen" (Isa 51:1) is related to the past.
2. "Pay attention" (Isa 51:4) is related to the future.
3. "Listen" (Isa 51:7) is related to the present.
4. "Awake, awake" (Isa 51:9).
5. "Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself!" (Isa 51:17).
6. "Awake, awake" (Isa 52:1).
7. "Depart, depart" (Isa 52:11).

It begins with a threefold call to listen and pay attention to the word (verses 1,4,7) the LORD speaks to His people. In verse 9 comes a fourth and first double call. This comes from the people and is addressed to God to save them from the two beasts. In verse 17 the fifth call sounds, in which the LORD speaks again to His people to rouse themselves because of His

anger by means of the king of the North. In the sixth call (Isa 52:1) the LORD speaks again to His people to awaken. The seventh time (Isa 52:11) is a kind of summary and climax with also a double call to depart. Toward this climax both chapters work.

The whole section relates to the time just before the end of exile. They must wake up and prepare to depart from Babylon and return to Jerusalem. Also here is the double bottom, in which we notice not only the immediate pre-fulfillment but also the final fulfillment related to the end time. Then Israel will return to the land from the nations and the enemies will be exterminated. They will enter the peace and joy of the realm. Besides the literal and prophetic explanation, there is also the practical application for us.

### Isa 51:1-3 | Example of Abraham and Sarah

*1 "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,  
Who seek the LORD:*

*Look to the rock from which you were hewn  
And to the quarry from which you were dug.*

*2 "Look to Abraham your father  
And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain;  
When [he was but] one I called him,  
Then I blessed him and multiplied him."*

*3 Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion;  
He will comfort all her waste places.  
And her wilderness He will make like Eden,  
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;  
Joy and gladness will be found in her,  
Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.*

The remnant is called to listen to the LORD (verse 1). Listening is the hallmark of the faithful remnant. The Lord Jesus says of His sheep that they hear His voice (Jn 10:16; cf. Amos 3:12). In Revelation 2-3 it is said seven times: "He who has an ear (singular), let him hear." It follows the example of the Savior Who Himself said: "The Lord GOD has opened My ear" (Isa 50:5). However, before the seed of the Word can germinate, the ground

must be ploughed, that is to say, before they listen to the Word, they must first go through trouble and distress.

The LORD addresses Himself to the believing remnant among His people who pursue righteousness and seek Him. The unbelieving part is proud of heart and far from righteousness (Isa 46:12). The remnant is hungry and thirsty for righteousness. The Lord Jesus can say to them that they are "blessed" (Mt 5:6). This longing for righteousness comes from an inner connection with Christ, Who is the righteousness of God (1Cor 1:30).

In the realm of peace there is no need to pursue righteousness (Isa 32:1), but now there is. We have to do this in the time of decay in which we live and we are urged to do so (2Tim 2:22a). The faithful share in the spirit of faith by abstaining from earthly pleasures to pursue the objects of their desires.

Abraham is the rock from which the stones used to build the house of Israel were hewn. Sarah is the quarry from which they were dug. The reference here is to the fact that Abraham and Sarah are loners. God has called Abraham when he was alone and was able to bless and multiply him. He can do this in the same way with the remnant, which also feels like a loner among the mass.

What is meant here as an encouragement to the people is abused by the unbelieving people to appropriate the land in disobedience (Eze 33:24). The remnant is now encouraged as a loner not to participate in the worship of the image of the beast that will be common during the time of the great tribulation. Only then can the LORD give His blessing.

For the believing remnant the reference to Abraham is also meaningful in another sense. It has to do with the old age and infertile state of the marriage of Abraham and Sarah. In that state the LORD has worked through His own supernatural power in response to the faith of Abraham (verse 2; Rom 4:19-21). Israel originally looked equally barren and desolate. This is the origin of the people of Israel, and the LORD calls them to remember this in the picture of the rock and the quarry. Just as the LORD did with the lonely Abraham and the barren Sarah, so He will do with the destroyed and lonely Zion (verse 3).

The Lord Jesus was also a Loner on earth. He has pursued righteousness in a perfect way and fulfilled it, with the high point and at the same time the low point His work on the cross. The result is a tremendous fruit. An innumerable number of people have been saved by Him because He fell into the earth like the grain of wheat and died (Jn 12:24).

Just as joy has come to Sarah after a lengthy period of barrenness, so after a long time of trouble and abandonment Israel will know joy and gladness again. The comparison with Eden also shows that it is about the future because Israel has never known such a situation, not even in the glory days of Solomon, let alone in the days of Isaiah.

### **Isa 51:4-8 | The Salvation of the LORD Is Near**

4 *"Pay attention to Me, O My people,  
And give ear to Me, O My nation;  
For a law will go forth from Me,  
And I will set My justice for a light of the peoples.*  
5 *"My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth,  
And My arms will judge the peoples;  
The coastlands will wait for Me,  
And for My arm they will wait expectantly.*  
6 *"Lift up your eyes to the sky,  
Then look to the earth beneath;  
For the sky will vanish like smoke,  
And the earth will wear out like a garment  
And its inhabitants will die in like manner;  
But My salvation will be forever,  
And My righteousness will not wane.*  
7 *"Listen to Me, you who know righteousness,  
A people in whose heart is My law;  
Do not fear the reproach of man,  
Nor be dismayed at their revilings.*  
8 *"For the moth will eat them like a garment,  
And the grub will eat them like wool.  
But My righteousness will be forever,  
And My salvation to all generations."*

The LORD addresses His people here with “My people” (verse 4). By calling it like that, He encourages the believing remnant. Then the people are no longer called “Lo-Ammi”, which means “not My people” (Hos 1:9) and God’s judgment no longer rests on them. The bond between Israel and the LORD has been restored. The covenant, that is to say, the new covenant, is now made on the basis of the price paid by the Mediator. Israel will realize this only later. After a look back to the past, God’s Word already makes them look to the future. These are vistas that you get when you climb a height through God’s Word. In these vistas the state of the realm of peace is unfolded before their eyes (verses 5-6).

The section that begins with verse 4 speaks of the times when the restoration of Israel will culminate in a blessing for the entire world and later in the disappearance of the whole world of the old creation. The law here is not that of Sinai, but stands for the teaching that God wants to give to the nations through Israel. In this way His righteousness is brought near to the nations and the nations will place their hope in His arm, which is His power, and no longer trust in their own power (verse 5; cf. Isa 40:11). “My arms” that will judge nations may indicate the government of God that He will exercise through the glorified saints (Mt 19:28).

The power, “My arms”, which He has shown in the exercise of His judgment (Isa 51:9; 52:10), He will use for blessing and salvation (Isa 40:10) for the remaining nations, even those who are far away. Not only will sin still exist in the realm of peace, but the whole of the old creation has been affected by it. The heavens must therefore vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment affected by the moth, and the inhabitants will die like mosquitoes (verse 6; cf. 2Pet 3:13). None of this is fulfilled in the days of Cyrus. Those who are saved will never perish and God’s righteousness will endure forever.

For those who know God’s righteousness, the call follows not to fear the reproach of man (verse 7), for these oppressors will perish as a garment consumed by the moth and the grub (verse 8). The imagery shows that God uses small, despicable things to fulfill great plans. The order here is salvation and righteousness, while in verse 6 the order is righteousness and salvation.

The faithful remnant will suffer tremendously under the power of the beast. But while people say: “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” (Rev 13:4), the LORD says: ‘They are only mortals, you need not fear them.’ Fear of people only disappears when we stand before the Lord.

### **Isa 51:9-10 | Call for Intervention of the LORD**

*9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD;  
Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago.  
Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces,  
Who pierced the dragon?  
10 Was it not You who dried up the sea,  
The waters of the great deep;  
Who made the depths of the sea a pathway  
For the redeemed to cross over?*

The preceding call to listen with the promise of salvation must have awakened in the hearts of the faithful a longing for the promised salvation (verse 9). They know that the arm of the LORD can work it. That is why they call upon Him to awaken in order to come to their aid. Here they ask for the revelation of His arm (verse 5), His power (Isa 53:1). Did not His arm knock down Pharaoh and his gang?

Rahab is not only a poetic name for Egypt, but is also the monstrous power behind Egypt (Psa 87:4; 89:10). The dragon refers to Pharaoh as the instrument of satan. The LORD then delivered His people and dried up the sea as a way of escape (verse 10). This remembrance of the deliverance in the past and the certainty of the deliverance in the future bring to the triple exclamation to the arm of the LORD to awaken. Rahab is a picture of the beast in the future (Rev 13:1-8) with the dragon (satan) in the background (Rev 12:3-5). But the LORD will help Israel (Rev 12:6).

It is good for the believer to remember the former mercies of the Lord. It is also necessary not only to occupy oneself with the past, but to let the power of hope do its cleansing work. This dual approach – of past and future – provides the power to pray, not only for deliverance, but above all

for what serves the glory of God. This will provide an answer from God's side that will far exceed the expectation of salvation.

### **Isa 51:11 | The Secure Future for God's People**

*11 So the ransomed of the LORD will return  
And come with joyful shouting to Zion,  
And everlasting joy [will be] on their heads.  
They will obtain gladness and joy,  
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.*

What follows in this verse is scarcely surpassed in Scripture in the beauty of the language and in the benevolence of the assurance given to God's people regarding their future. It all speaks gloriously of the millennial blessing that will be enjoyed by Israel. This prospect is magnified and strengthened by the review of the trials and sufferings in which they have been.

In the midst of the great tribulation, the remnant will sing in faith a song of praise, even before the enemy is broken. It is reminiscent of King Jehoshaphat singing a song of praise before the enemy is defeated by the LORD (2Chr 20:21-22) and of Paul and Silas singing a song of praise before the earthquake and salvation come (Acts 16:25-26). Thus it is with the even more glorious prospect that we may enjoy as members of the church. Our present experiences of deep trials and tribulation are relieved by hope, a hope that 'softens every sorrow'.

### **Isa 51:12-16 | The LORD Is for His People**

*12 "I, even I, am He who comforts you.  
Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies  
And of the son of man who is made like grass,  
13 That you have forgotten the LORD your Maker,  
Who stretched out the heavens  
And laid the foundations of the earth,  
That you fear continually all day long because of the fury of the oppressor,  
As he makes ready to destroy?  
But where is the fury of the oppressor?*

*14 The exile will soon be set free, and will not die in the dungeon, nor will his bread be lacking. 15 For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar (the LORD of hosts is His name). 16 I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, 'You are My people.'"*

These verses continue in another way the comfort given by the LORD. Many of His people are in fear of the oppressor (Babylon). No doubt, the oppression of the antichrist, the man of sin in the coming day (2Thes 2:3-4), in the time of "Jacob's distress," will have the same effect. At that time, this section seems to apply particularly. But if the man of sin is there, the LORD is also there with His comfort. That is why He speaks of Himself as "He who comforts you" (verse 12). If so, why would they be afraid of a mortal man?

The tyranny of the antichrist will be short-lived. The LORD has always had His own manner and time for the deliverance of His earthly people. Fear is the cause of God being forgotten (verse 13). Awareness of the presence and power of the LORD is the sufficient repellent of fear. Again and again the LORD reminds Israel that He is their Maker and that with His power He has extended the heavens and founded the earth. Why, then, should they always fear the threat of the oppressor, even when he is after their destruction?

The oppressor, Babylon, will soon be defeated by Cyrus, the Persian. Then the prisoners will be set free (verse 14). This is the imminent deliverance from the Babylonian exile. This prophecy will also have its ultimate fulfillment when the Jews will be delivered in the future from the suffering of the nations because of the beast and the antichrist and they will return to their land in acknowledgment of their Savior Messiah. Here again we can see Cyrus as a picture of Christ Who will come as Victor.

The LORD shows that He has the power to do this by pointing out that He raises the sea that therefore is in His power (verse 15). It is the picture of the sea of the nations that is raging against His people, which also refers to the beast coming up out of the sea (Rev 13:1). Like the literal sea, He can also silence the nations (Psa 65:7; Isa 17:12-13). In the end time, the Lord



Jesus will judge all nations and silence them through His personal intervention at His appearance.

Verse 16 tells how the Jews will become messengers of the LORD. They will proclaim the gospel of the kingdom (Mt 24:14). He has put His words in their mouths – prophetically the perfect tense is used here (cf. Mt 10:19-20). The result of their preaching can be seen in the conversion of many Jews (Rev 7:1-8) and many of the nations (Rev 7:9-17).

He will cover them with the shadow of His hand, as He did with the Messiah (Isa 49:2). He does not only do this to protect them, but also to make them fit for the purpose He has in mind. That purpose is to bring heaven and earth into a state where His kingdom of righteousness and peace can be established and His people will truly be His people. Then the forces of nature, both of heaven and of earth, will no longer be used to carry out the Divine judgments, as has so often been the case and will still be before the Lord appears in glory.

The messenger of the gospel of grace proclaimed today may apply these words to himself in the certainty that the Lord will also put His words in his mouth. He is a messenger of the Lord with the Lord's message. "To establish the heavens" means to effect a state of heavenly blessing. This happens when the gospel is accepted. "To found the earth" means laying a foundation of righteousness on which the life of faith can develop.

The testimony of the messenger is only reliable and effective if he clings to the truth of Scripture. Also, the bringer of the gospel may know himself under His protection, covered under the shadow of His hand.

### **Isa 51:17-23 | End of the Suffering of God's People**

*17 Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem,  
You who have drunk from the LORD's hand the cup of His anger;  
The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.  
18 There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne,  
Nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has reared.  
19 These two things have befallen you;  
Who will mourn for you?  
The devastation and destruction, famine and sword;*

*How shall I comfort you?*

*20 Your sons have fainted,  
They lie [helpless] at the head of every street,  
Like an antelope in a net,  
Full of the wrath of the LORD,  
The rebuke of your God.*

*21 Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted,  
Who are drunk, but not with wine:*

*22 Thus says your Lord, the LORD, even your God  
Who contends for His people,  
"Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling,  
The chalice of My anger;  
You will never drink it again.*

*23 "I will put it into the hand of your tormentors,  
Who have said to you, 'Lie down that we may walk over [you].'  
You have even made your back like the ground  
And like the street for those who walk over [it]."*

This last section of the chapter describes, in vivid language, the consequences of the judgments on the people by the invasion of the king of the North. This is the result of their persistent rebellion against God, culminating in the rejection of Christ. The people call upon the LORD to awaken and act (verse 9), in response to which the LORD calls upon His people to awaken from the sleep of their sin.

The people need to wake up and ask themselves why these things happened to them. After 2,000 years of suffering, with the low point in the Nazi extermination camps, they have returned to the land. Another low point is the future king of the Jews, the antichrist. He will introduce the most terrible idolatry into the land. Finally, the people will be attacked by a coalition led by the king of the North with several islamic countries as allies. This attack will again cost Israel millions of people (Zec 13:8).

Jerusalem is presented as a woman lying on the ground in an intoxicated state, having drunk the cup of the wrath of the LORD. Not one of her sons is able to guide her, take her by the hand, raise her up (verse 18). It is the time of Jacob's distress. In a short time two thirds of the people, that is the ungodly mass, will perish (Zec 13:8). The prophet sees no possibility

of comforting her in the devastation, destruction, hunger, and sword that have come upon her (verse 19). In this a twofold suffering has come upon her: loss of possession by devastation and destruction, and loss of life by hunger and sword.

This is also how it goes with the church of God under the discipline that He has to bring upon her. Her spiritual goods, such as knowing her spiritual blessings, are taken away from her. Also the spiritual life disappears, there is no growth, no increase, there are no new conversions. In this situation it is important to recognize God's hand in this.

The sons of Jerusalem lie powerless, incapable of helping, just like an antelope is exhausted by the vain fight to be released from the hunter's net in which she is imprisoned (verse 20). Deliverance can only come from God. In His pity and mercy He promises to give it (verses 21-23). He reminds them that they are His people and He describes Himself as their Advocate, defending their cause (verse 22).

He will also deal with the nations He has used and will use as a disciplinary rod for His people. Those peoples have exceeded the limits of the power that have been set for them. They have allowed themselves to be used in the service of the enemy in order to let his wrath come upon God's people. Therefore God will give the cup of His wrath to those nations to drink (verse 23). They have thought to trample the people like dust on the streets. God will turn that situation around and bring man's pride to complete humiliation. This will happen in the future when satan's attempts to destroy Israel have reached their climax.

For this Israel will first – just like the prodigal son (Lk 15:17-19) – have to come to terms with themselves and with the LORD. They must – just like Isaiah – see themselves in the light of a three times holy God (Isa 6:2-5), before the LORD will be able to use them – just like Isaiah – as a servant in the future. They must – just like Joseph's brothers at the time with respect to Joseph – come to acknowledgment that the suffering has come from what they have done to Christ. Only then they will – like Joseph's brothers at the time – discover that God has turned their sin of rejecting Christ for good in order to save a great people (Gen 50:20).

## Isaiah 52

### **Isa 52:1-6 | Zion Raised From the Dust**

*1 Awake, awake,  
Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion;  
Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments,  
O Jerusalem, the holy city;  
For the uncircumcised and the unclean  
Will no longer come into you.  
2 Shake yourself from the dust, rise up,  
O captive Jerusalem;  
Loose yourself from the chains around your neck,  
O captive daughter of Zion.  
3 For thus says the LORD, "You were sold for nothing and you will be  
redeemed without money." 4 For thus says the Lord GOD, "My people  
went down at the first into Egypt to reside there; then the Assyrian op-  
pressed them without cause. 5 Now therefore, what do I have here," declares  
the LORD, "seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?"  
[Again] the LORD declares, "Those who rule over them howl, and My name  
is continually blasphemed all day long. 6 Therefore My people shall know  
My name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, 'Here I am.'"*

Again the call of the LORD to Zion comes to awaken (Isa 51:17,9) and to clothe oneself with strength (verse 1). That strength is needed to trust in God. Jerusalem is called Zion here because God in His grace is now about to come to His purpose. The city is now called "the holy city" because she is the city of the Holy One of Israel. Likewise, the call comes to Jerusalem to be clothed with beautiful garments.

The strength of the redeemed is the strength of God through redemption (cf. Jdg 6:12-16; Psa 84:5,7). This will only become fully true in the end time, because since and also during Cyrus, their deliverer from the power of Babylon, there has been no question of clothing with strength.

He still addresses the city. She is in a state of extreme desolation and covered with dust. She is powerless under the treatment of the enemy and deprived of her priestly and royal garments. Instead, she wears the chains of captivity around her neck (verse 2). She must awaken. However, she must not only awaken, but also put herself in a position of calm dignity and authority; she must clothe herself with spiritual strength.

She will again become a festive city of the LORD. Strangers will no longer pass through her. The terrible invasion of the king of the North is now past perfect tense. Although they threaten Jerusalem again (Isaiah 37-38), they will be defeated just as they were then. No nation in the world will conquer Jerusalem again, for the LORD Himself will encamp around the holy city and defend her (Isa 27:2-3).

This has not been fulfilled by the Medes and Persians and the following empires that have always ruled over Jerusalem during the “the times of the Gentiles” (Lk 21:24). Babylon has sat as queen, but will be humbled to the dust, while Jerusalem will be raised from the dust to sit on the throne of glory. Jerusalem will break her chain.

Babylon is no longer mentioned here by name. First she is broken as a religious power. Then the political and religious power of the antichrist or the second beast are broken. Finally, the political power of the restored Roman Empire is definitively broken. The “the times of the Gentiles” (Lk 21:24) are then fulfilled and past.

The promises that follow in verses 3-6 stand, with their comfort, against the background of past misery. The people of the LORD are reminded that they have been sold “for nothing” (verse 3). They have been given into the hands of the nations, without any benefit to the LORD. His only purpose is to bring them to repentance under His chastening rod. No money will be paid for their redemption. He will work their salvation by sovereign grace and omnipotent power. Their deliverance will come exclusively from Him. He will do so by chastising their enemy.

The deliverance from the power of oppressive Egypt and Assyria are mentioned as illustrations (verse 4). The question in verse 5 has the meaning: ‘What advantage do I have in the midst of My people?’ The people “have been taken away without cause” and their oppressors continually blas-

pheme the Name of the LORD. This blasphemy will cease by the intervention of the LORD in power and majesty. His Name, so blasphemed by the nations, shall be revealed to His people (verse 6).

His nature, His features and His power, represented by His Name, will be revealed to them in the day of their redemption. He makes Himself known as the ‘I am’, the faithful God of the covenant. His Self-revelation works that they will know the voice of their Redeemer (Isa 63:1). Then the prayer “hallowed be Your name” (Mt 6:9) will be fulfilled.

In this way the Lord reveals Himself to us also in times of oppression and difficulty. He uses these circumstances as a means to increase our knowledge of Him, of His features, power and grace. When we ourselves are no longer capable of anything, He makes Himself known to us in His omnipotence. We are like Peter sinking into the water, calling upon the Lord and then learning to know the mighty power of the Lord’s arm and more than that.

### **Isa 52:7-10 | Peace Announced**

*7 How lovely on the mountains  
Are the feet of him who brings good news,  
Who announces peace  
And brings good news of happiness,  
Who announces salvation,  
[And] says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”  
8 Listen! Your watchmen lift up [their] voices,  
They shout joyfully together;  
For they will see with their own eyes  
When the LORD restores Zion.  
9 Break forth, shout joyfully together,  
You waste places of Jerusalem;  
For the LORD has comforted His people,  
He has redeemed Jerusalem.  
10 The LORD has bared His holy arm  
In the sight of all the nations,  
That all the ends of the earth may see  
The salvation of our God.*

These verses contain the triumphant expression as a result of the news of the great salvation worked out for the people of the LORD before the eyes of all nations. Wars have ceased until the end of the earth. Peace will reign because God rules and the LORD returns to Zion. The feet of the messenger are lovely to see – not the *sound* of his footsteps, but the *appearance* of his feet – not only because of their resilient speed, but also because of the delight of the heart that gives character to their movement and the content of the message (verse 7).

The remnant has fervently prayed for the coming of the LORD to redeem. Now that moment has finally come. The LORD has come, He is on the way to Zion. The mountains are the mountains of the land and especially those north of Jerusalem. They are the mountains that the LORD calls “My mountains” (Isa 49:11). What are natural obstacles become roads through which God’s herald comes.

He proclaims peace and salvation, which is completely different from the peace and security the world speaks about under the influence of satan (1Thes 5:3). There is talk of “peace”, “good news” and “salvation”. *Peace* with God through the blood of Christ instead of estrangement; the *good news*, which benefits instead of the wrong; *salvation*, not only salvation from judgment, but also continual preservation, forever, instead of judgment and being perished forever. It is peace *with* God through the sacrifice of the cross and the peace *of* God in living with Him. There is also salvation, healing from all the consequences of sin. All destruction and injury caused by sin will be healed. This is the situation when God reigns as King.

These messengers of good news are also present today. The quotation of this verse in Romans 10 confirms this (Rom 10:15). In the quotation ‘the mountains’ are omitted. The apostle rejoices that he was allowed to be such a messenger. It may also be our joy to share in that activity and its joy. The feet of someone who goes out with the gospel near or far are lovely in the eyes of Him Who died to be able to send out the message and the messenger.

The watchmen in verse 8 who raise their voices are the prophets, like Isaiah, who look into the distance like from a watchtower. Usually watchmen raise their voices to warn, but now they begin to sing. The watchmen

also have no difference of opinion about what they see, but are unanimous about it. They see how the LORD comes to His people, they see it becoming light.

They are to be distinguished from the messenger of the previous verse who proclaims the news of the kingdom when Christ has come. These faithful watchmen, seeing future events from afar, are referred to in 1 Peter 1 (1Pet 1:10-12; cf. Isa 21:8,11; Hab 2:1-3). The day will come when they will see with their own eyes the return of the LORD to Zion. They will see how the LORD restores Zion, they will stand face to face with this work (cf. Num 14:14). No wonder they will burst into a song of joy.

In verse 9 the ruins of Jerusalem are called upon to do the same. The language is vivid, it shows the glory of the restoration after the lengthy period of destruction. There is a twofold reason for this: God's Word and God's work (cf. Lk 24:19; Acts 7:22), the word of comfort and the work of delivering power. Comfort and deliverance are the continual ministry of the Holy Spirit in our sorrow and afflictions, our trials and dangers: comfort in the midst of them and redemption out of them. We may rejoice in the comfort of and trust in deliverance.

Verse 10 is a retrospective from a future fulfillment. It is the picture of a battle, in which all the covering of His arm has been removed to use it in its full force. The arm of the LORD is bare to redeem the remnant by judging both Assyria and Babylon. The foolish misconceptions of the nations about God will be nullified. Their refusal to acknowledge the Son of God will be vigorously repressed by His personal intervention. Thus they will witness the salvation of the God of Israel.

### **Isa 52:11-12 | Call to Leave Babylon**

*11 Depart, depart, go out from there,  
Touch nothing unclean;  
Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves,  
You who carry the vessels of the LORD.  
12 But you will not go out in haste,  
Nor will you go as fugitives;  
For the LORD will go before you,*



| *And the God of Israel [will be] your rear guard.*

These verses are about an other side of the circumstances and deal with the release of the exiles. The previous six calls have worked toward this call. God's people are commanded to leave the area of their exile (cf. Isa 48:20). The commanding language refers to Babylon, but Babylon stands for more than just the city. It also speaks of terrible idolatry caused by the beast of the Roman Empire and the antichrist, as the context shows (Isa 2:8-9; Rev 13:12-15).

God's people are commanded not to touch anything unclean at their departure. They must not take anything of Babylon with them. What they must take with them are "the vessels of the LORD" that have been brought to Babylon. This refers to the return by order of Cyrus and the return of the objects taken away by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 1:7-11). Unlike their fleeing from Egypt, their departure from Babylon will not take place in haste or as a run (Deu 16:3). It is more of a victory march. Their entry into the realm of peace will be even more so.

Their attitude will speak of being perfectly ready to resume the service of worship of the LORD in His temple. Therefore absolute purity is required. However, they will need His guidance and protection and they will be assured of that. The Messiah Himself will guarantee it. He gives the promise: "For the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel [will be] your rear guard."

This all has a direct message for those who, being objects or vessels themselves, are set apart to be used by the Lord (2Tim 2:21). They have the holy responsibility "to keep oneself unstained from the world" (Jam 1:27b) and also that they "cleanse" themselves "from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Cor 7:1).

It also applies to the Babylon of the end time (Rev 18:4a). It is the things that come to us from professing Christianity and with which we should not defile ourselves by opening up for worldly elements in order to introduce them into the church.

### **Isa 52:13-15 | High and Lifted Up**

| *13 Behold, My servant will prosper,*

*He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.  
14 Just as many were astonished at you, [My people],  
So His appearance was marred more than any man  
And His form more than the sons of men.  
15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations,  
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;  
For what had not been told them they will see,  
And what they had not heard they will understand.*

Here begins a totally new section. The division into chapters is not well done here. Isaiah 53 must begin with verse 13 of this chapter. The last three verses of Isaiah 52 and whole Isaiah 53 contain one great theme: the suffering, rejected, atoning and exalted Servant of the LORD. This whole section forms the heart of the second great part of the book of Isaiah. It is right in the middle of it.

We can say that in this section we enter, as it were, the holy of holies. This makes it even more necessary than otherwise to approach this section with great reverence and deep awe and take it in (cf. Exo 3:5; Jos 5:15). In the heart of this section the LORD reveals His heart. And Who else is the heart of God other than the Lord Jesus, Who was and is always in the bosom of the Father? The Lord Jesus has come to declare Him in grace to sinful people (Jn 1:18). In this section it is about Christ and His work and its glorious consequences, both for God and for us.

This is also the fourth and last song or the last prophecy about the Servant of the LORD. In the previous three songs or prophecies we have seen that the Servant is the Chosen One of God (Isa 42:1-9), the Rejected One of Israel (Isa 49:1-13) and the dependent and obedient Servant (Isa 50:1-11). Now the covering is taken away from Israel (2Cor 3:16) and the arm of the LORD is revealed.

The chosen and rejected Servant, obedient to the death of the cross, turns out to be the Guilt Offering for Israel! He dies as the *substitute* offering for Israel. His blood is the blood of the new covenant. What Israel meant for evil with the rejection of Christ, the LORD has turned for the better. The Servant appears to have been sent by God "to preserve many people alive" (Gen 50:20).

Joseph's brothers did not realize that the mighty viceroy of Egypt and their rejected brother are one and the same person. Thus, Israel does not recognize that the bare, mighty arm of the LORD and the rejected Jesus of Nazareth are one and the same Person. So blind are they as the servant of the LORD. A veil lies over their faces. But the perfect Servant has come to heal the blind servant, to remove the veil from their faces.

Just as Joseph reveals himself to his brothers in holy seclusion without strangers (Gen 45:1), so the Servant will make Himself known to the faithful remnant. Like Thomas, a picture of the remnant, they will recognize Him by His wounds and bow down before Him and declare: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28).

The fifteen verses of this section have been written in the form of a poem, consisting of five stanzas of three verses each. These five stanzas are written in a so-called chiasm, a mirror technique to emphasize the middle part:

1. the glorification of the Servant (Isa 52:13-15).
  - 2. the suffering of the Servant (Isa 53:1-3)
  - 3. the atonement by the Servant (Isa 53:4-6)
  - 4 the suffering of the Servant (Isa 53:7-9)
  5. the glorification of the Servant (Isa 53:10-12)
- a. stanzas 1 and 5 are about the glorification of the Servant;
  - b. stanzas 2 and 4 are about the suffering of the Servant;
  - c. the middle stanza (3) is about the atonement by the Servant.

The LORD begins with the words "behold, My servant" (verse 13). All attention is directed toward Him (cf. Mt 25:6). It is not about Israel, but about the Messiah. The connection with what immediately preceded this is striking, even if it is in the form of a great contrast. In the foregoing, the deliverance from Babylonian exile is in the foreground, with the future and final deliverance behind it. Deliverance, however, can only be effected by the servant of the LORD, regardless of whether it concerns the Jew or the heathen. No fulfillment of any prophecy is possible without the Lord Jesus and His work on the cross.

That is why God calls upon us to look at Him, first in His prosperous action and then in His exalted position (verse 13). After that, there is a brief mention of His humiliation in anticipation of the coming revelation in

power and glory (verses 14-15). This is all, in a compact form, the theme on which after this introduction will be elaborated in the next twelve verses.

“Behold, My servant will prosper” (verse 13a). There are two meanings of the word “prosper”. The first is wisdom – a characteristic of which is prudence – and the second is prosperity or success. A complete representation of the text can be: ‘Will act wisely, resulting in prosperity.’ This describes in a compact way His life on earth up to and including the cross, in everything He says and does, with the prosperous consequences that are inextricably connected to it. He maintains His testimony without surrendering His life until the appointed hour is there. Never is there greater prosperity attached to any action than to the surrendering of His life as a willing and atoning sacrifice (cf. Isa 53:10).

“He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted” (verse 13b). The consequence of His wise and prosperous action is that God has exalted Him greatly. There are three stages in that exaltation: His resurrection, His ascension and His glorification at God’s right hand (Acts 2:33; Phil 2:9; Heb 1:3,13).

In verse 14 the form of a speaking *about* changes into a speaking *to* and then again into a speaking *about*. The cause of amazement and dismay is the fact of His being marred. This determines us by the atrocities that have been inflicted on Him after His capture. His face and His body have been marred in an unparalleled gruesome way. The soldiers struck Him with a fake scepter on His face and on His forehead crowned with spines, until He was no longer recognizable. The inflicted flogging ripped the flesh from both His back and His chest.

This was the Lord Jesus as He was brought out by Pilate and shown to the people to arouse their pity and to work that they would not ask for more of His blood. It was in vain. It made their disgust of Him and the call for His blood even greater. His appearance was so completely different from what they had expected from the Messiah, that they looked at Him with dismay. So they stared at Him (Psa 22:17b).

While Israel in this way rejected Him, in the coming day the contempt of the nations through Pilate will turn into amazement and dismay at His power and glory. The “thus” of verse 15 corresponds to the “just” of verse

14. The amazement will be so great that kings will be overwhelmed by speechlessness, dumbfounded by what they see and of what they have never heard. The dismay at His suffering will be far surpassed by the dismay at His glorification. The “sprinkling” of “many nations” refers to the blessing that comes from His humiliation.

These verses twice express great amazement and dismay: first about the horrible humiliation of the Messiah, then about His awe-inspiring glorification. Now those in power still have their mouths full of boasting (Psa 2:1-3). Then they will hear the reality and meaning of this amazing revelation. They will see that the people plagued and oppressed by them are the people chosen and loved by God under a King Who has laid His glory on those people. When they will see and hear it, they will also believe with all their heart.

However, this verse does not only refer to the future. Paul applies it to the preaching of the gospel in the time between the cross and the second coming, that is the period in which we live now. He quotes this verse to make the gospel known in ever more distant places and to extend his missionary journeys to areas where the gospel has not yet been preached (Rom 15:20-21).

## Isaiah 53

### **Isa 53:1-3 | Despised**

*1 Who has believed our message?  
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?  
2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,  
And like a root out of parched ground;  
He has no [stately] form or majesty  
That we should look upon Him,  
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.  
3 He was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
And like one from whom men hide their face  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

Verse 1. Directly upon the amazement of the earthly rulers because of what they see and hear, which is spoken of in the last verse of the previous chapter (Isa 52:15), now follows the reason why Israel did not believe. The cause lies with themselves. They are the grieving and repentant speakers in the following verses. They lamentingly acknowledge their unbelief. They have heard the prophets speak to them, yet they did not believe. Here the people, that is, the remnant, confess their unbelief in this message. Something as ‘unbelievable’ as the work of the Messiah can only be accepted through the work of the Holy Spirit, Who will also work humiliation and faith in the remnant when they will see their Messiah (Eze 36:25-27; Zec 12:10-14).

We have anticipated this confession through the work of the Holy Spirit Who was sent from heaven. We have already confessed our sins and acknowledged Him as the God-given Savior (Eph 1:12) without having seen Him.

As a people, Israel has refused to believe the message that has been preached to them. They have also been blind to the revealed arm of the LORD. His arm speaks of His formidable majesty and power (Isa 40:10; 50:2; 51:5,9; 52:10). Verse 1b, according to its meaning, can be read as fol-

lows: "Who has an eye for the revelation of God's mighty deeds that He has accomplished in and to the Messiah?"

In their unbelief, they have failed to acknowledge what God's power has done in the suffering and resurrection of Christ from the dead (Rom 1:4; Eph 1:20). Soon the remnant will see it, when they will see Him Whom they have pierced (Rev 1:7a; Zec 12:10). They confess here, prophetically through the mouth of the prophet, that they did not see it.

The two disciples from Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35) are also a type of the believing remnant. They believe in the glorified Christ, but cannot believe in a suffering and deceased Christ. They believe that the arm of the LORD is revealed when Christ reigns, but they cannot and will not believe that the same arm of the LORD can reveal itself in the suffering and death of Christ. That is why the Lord Jesus taught them: "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Lk 24:25-26).

The evangelist John quotes the first verse of this chapter to indicate that the unbelief of the Jews in the days of the Lord Jesus proves the truth of this verse and fulfills it (Jn 12:37-38). By the way, God's Word proves here in the clearest way that the LORD of Whom Isaiah speaks is the same as the Lord Jesus. John begins the quotation with: "LORD, WHO ...?" He asks this question as the messenger of God. It is also the question of the faithful remnant who preached the gospel in the great tribulation and sees so little result.

It is the observation of so many evangelists today (Rom 10:16). If the preaching does not seem to bear fruit, there is a great danger of becoming discouraged. But Paul makes it clear in this quote that the gospel must not only be believed but also obeyed.

Verse 2. Here the Messiah, Christ, is described in His humiliation on earth. The prophet writes in the past tense, as if the events have already taken place. Israel did not believe the message concerning the Messiah and did not recognize the power of God in and to Him, because He is a humbled and to the flesh unattractive Servant. But He grows up before God, that

is, under His protection and pleasure (cf. 1Pet 2:4). God takes care of this tender life.

The root of Jesse has been hewn, but there remains a stump (Isa 11:1a), inconspicuous and unrecognizable. The stump stands in parched ground. That speaks of the unbelief of the people. But from the root of this stump grows a shoot or a branch (Isa 11:1b) – a shoot does not grow on a tree trunk but on the root of a tree. There is still life. While Israel does not notice it, the shoot grows before God. This insignificant shoot is the arm of the LORD.

They did not realize that Christ grew up before God. The pleasantness of Christ in the days of His youth and His growing up like a tender shoot to a Man is contrasted with the state of barrenness, religious unfruitfulness and slavery of the people. They have seen nothing in His appearance to feel a natural attraction to Him, nothing of splendor or beauty in which their natural feelings have rejoiced (cf. 1Sam 16:6-7).

When they saw Him, they saw nothing to see, so little was there that was attractive to the natural eye of man. To unbelief there was nothing in Him that made Him stand out among men. There was an inner beauty in Him, but it remained hidden from the mass of the people by their unbelief and was perceived only by faith (Jn 1:14). "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (Jn 1:5).

Verse 3. As "despised and forsaken of men" He has been rejected and abandoned by the people. As "a man of sorrows", His life was characterized as that of someone characterized by inner grief in experiencing the consequences of sin and the grief around Him. His whole existence was marked by grief. That He is "acquainted with grief" characterizes Him as Someone Who alone is capable of complete familiarity with all forms of sickness as a consequence of sin.

The last part of the verse gives even more powerful expression to the attitude of the people as a whole. It shows the character of their contempt. People hide their faces or turn away from what they find unbearable to see. They held Him for a leper. They regarded Him as nothing. All this mentions the deep remorse with which the people will later – when their



eyes are opened – remember their attitude toward Him during the days of His flesh.

We can summarize verses 1-3 as follows:

1. The account about the Servant that is not believed (verse 1).
2. The Person of the Servant Who is not attractive (verse 2).
3. The climax is: the Servant is despised (verse 3).

### **Isa 53:4-6 | Substitutional Suffering**

*4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.  
5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being [fell] upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.  
6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Him.*

We now come to the core of the message in this second main part of the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 40-66, which consists of three parts of nine chapters each. Of these three parts we are in the middle part of nine chapters, Isaiah 49-58. In this part we are now in the middle chapter, Isaiah 53. This center consists of five parts or stanzas of three verses, of which we are now in the third and middle (verses 4-6). Its content is the Lord Jesus Who, as the perfect Servant, takes the place of the failing servant, Israel, both in His life and in His death. In this whole song, the Servant takes in His suffering as the Substitute the place of Israel.

For the sake of clarity, it is good to point out that it is not ‘solidarity’ suffering with the suffering of mankind, as modern theologians claim, but substitutional suffering for penitent sinners. It is, as verse 10 unequivocally states, a guilt offering.

Verse 4. In verses 4-6 the remnant goes even deeper into the subject. They confess that His suffering has been of a totally different nature than they have assumed. He has not suffered because of His own sins, as they have assumed. He did not commit blasphemy when He called Himself God's Son. Christ suffered because of *their* sins. The suffering of the cross is now in sight. The change in their view is characterized by the opening word "surely".

The statement "our griefs [or: sickness] He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried", expresses even more fully what was mentioned in the previous verse in connection with this about Him. It tells how the Lord in His own Person has borne suffering that was not His. Matthew cites this in connection with His acts of healing and deliverance (Mt 8:16-17). This statement does not speak of His substitutional atonement, but it does refer to it. The Lord Jesus would not have been able to take away griefs, or sickness, if He had not taken away its core, sin, on the cross.

Verse 4 brings us to the cross, for only there can the statement "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" refer to. "Stricken" reminds us of the plague of leprosy. What was not the case with Him was the case with Miriam (Num 12:10), Gehazi (2Kgs 5:27) and Uzziah (2Chr 26:20). In their blindness, the Jews saw His suffering as the punishment for His own sins, which, according to them, had to be particularly numerous and great. In particular, we should think of the accusation of blasphemy, which He would have committed by equating Himself with God.

Verse 5. But now, under the power of the revelation of the great facts, they come to a complete change of opinion. We notice this in a peculiar way in the series of emphatic personal expressions in the plural which follow. "Pierced" and "crushed" are the strongest words to describe a violent and frightening death. There is emphasis on "our".

In clear words the doctrine of substitution is described here: Someone receives the punishment that others have deserved in their place, so that they can go out free (1Pet 2:24a). A simple doctrine, but an unimaginable truth.

The chastisement inflicted on Him by God is one that has served to our peace – the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, is summarizing, and describes

not only a peaceful state, but a welfare in general, prosperity and well-being and inner peace and rest. It is a punishment that has this effect for us.

This curious contradiction is also found in the wounds or scourging inflicted on Him, from which healing has originated for us. The wounds are the wounds that God inflicted on Him (1Pet 2:24b) and not those of the Roman soldiers who flogged Him. They are the marks of Divine judgment. The healing, the spiritual health we have received, is explicitly contrasted with the chastening or strikes of God to which He was subjected.

Verse 6. Now the climax of the confession comes from a deeply affected conscience on the part of the repentant people. He who leaves the Lord has no contact with others. Everyone goes his own way. They acknowledge that they have gone astray like sheep and express their awareness of the great grace in the overwhelming fact that "the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him". It has fallen on Him as a huge burden. He cared about our fate, but what an enormous burden fell on Him as a result. All our sins were laid on Him by God. He confessed them all one by one before God. Thus that entire burden is removed from the sight of God (cf. Lev 16:21).

The LORD takes the initiative here. He *wanted* the suffering of His Servant for the salvation of the sinful people who deviated from Him. Israel turned away from Him, but He did not turn away from His people. He let the sin of the people come down to the Man of His pleasure. In verse 4 the substitutional suffering of the Servant is the choice of the Servant Himself. Here in verse 6 it is what the LORD has chosen to do. The suffering of the Servant is not beyond the will of the Servant and the will of the LORD. On the contrary, it is the express will of the Servant, Who, when He comes into the world, says: "Behold, I have come ... to do Your will" (Heb 10:5,9).

What the people will soon acknowledge with regard to going their own way, is true for the whole human race. Man has replaced God's will with his own will. He has gone "his own way", placing himself in the center instead of God. In this general state of guilt and misery the grace of God has intervened. He has sent His Son to lay upon Him the full weight of iniquity (Rom 8:3; 2Cor 5:21) and the righteous anger that goes with it. Every person who confesses his sins may know that Christ has accomplished this

work for him as well and shares in this gracious act of God. The sins of the impenitent sinner are not part of this atoning work.

### **Isa 53:7-9 | Suffering, Death and Burial**

*7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth;  
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth.  
8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away;  
And as for His generation, who considered  
That He was cut off out of the land of the living  
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke [was due]?  
9 His grave was assigned with wicked men,  
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,  
Because He had done no violence,  
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.*

Verse 7. The fourth section or stanza, verses 7-9, describes, like the second section (verses 1-3), the suffering of the Servant, but adds His death and burial. He was “oppressed”, i.e. severely stricken and mistreated without sparing Him anything. It also refers to the driving or chasing of slaves or animals loaded with heavy loads (Exo 3:7; Job 39:7). The servant was such a ‘beast of burden’, but He did not open His mouth, He bowed under the burden, He suffered willingly and allowed them to abuse Him. Balaam’s beast of burden opened her mouth when Balaam struck her unjustly to drive her (Num 22:28; 2Pet 2:16). Jeremiah also compares himself to a lamb, but he did not keep his mouth shut and called for vengeance (Jer 11:19,20; 12:1-4).

For the Lord Jesus the way to slaughter was many times worse. He knew perfectly where He was going, but He did not open His mouth. He knew everything that would come upon Him (Jn 13:1; 18:4). It says twice in this verse that He did not open His mouth, underlining the importance of the voluntary surrender of Christ. He did not remain silent out of weakness, as if He did not know what to say. He knew that with one word He could destroy all His enemies (Jn 18:6). He did not remain silent out of powerless-

ness, but because He chose to remain silent. It was part of His obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:8).

‘Shearing’ is about taking away everything that is worthy of a human being. He did not protest against the inhuman and degrading treatment that was done to Him. Everything expresses His voluntary perseverance in a way in which He is unique. No one can be compared with Him. It is clearly in striking contrast with the going astray of man in the beginning of verse 6.

Verse 8. Of the unjust treatment and the unjust judicial verdict we are moved directly to Golgotha. “By oppression and judgment He was taken away” means that He was taken away “by an oppressive / humiliating / unjust judicial judgment” (Mt 26:66; 27:22-31; Acts 8:33). He did not receive a fair trial, but was utterly unjustly convicted by political conspiracy.

He was “taken away” from the “legal treatise” and taken to the cross and hastily crucified there, so that this heinous crime could be finished before sabbath. This section is about the fact that none of His contemporaries had any awareness of, let alone thought about what Christ endured. He was cut off out of the land of the living and thus everything was over for His contemporaries. The expression “as for His generation” has to do with His descent. The meaning is: “Who shall mention His royal descent, His rights as the Son of David” (Mt 1:1)?

The verse ends with the acknowledgment of the true cause of His suffering. The exclamation “for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke [was due]” not only comes from the mouth of the believing remnant of Israel, but also from the mouth of the God of Israel Himself. The word “stroke” (cf. verse 4) emphasizes this once more, because the stroke is the doom that God Himself has sent.

The eunuch, who is on his way back to his country from Jerusalem, reads just these verses when Philip joins him (Acts 8:30-35). The eunuch does not find the explanation of what he is reading easy, but still he has thought about what he has read. He understands that the lamb he is reading about must be Someone, a Person. His question about this is a wonderful reason for Philip to preach “Jesus” to him.

Verse 9. This fourth section (verses 7-9), which describes the character of the Servant's suffering and the manner in which He was killed, concludes with the mention of His burial. The first part of the verse reflects the intention of the sinners who wanted to let Him disappear into anonymity by burying Him in a kind of mass grave together with the two robbers who had been crucified with Him. But God had determined otherwise and provided an appropriate environment. Therefore, the Roman authorities allowed His body to be buried by and in the grave or tomb of "a rich man", Joseph of Arimathea (Mt 27:57-60).

Normally, a tomb is used several times to decompose the dead body and then keep it in ossuary (bone box). Only an extraordinarily rich person can be buried in a new tomb. It was a tomb "where no one had ever lain" (Lk 23:53b). He Who came from a virgin mother's womb could only be put in a 'virgin' tomb.

The word "death" is plural and expresses the violent nature, not to say the aggregated nature, the comprehensiveness of His death. The fact of His complete being free from sin – "no sin done", "no deceit ... in His mouth" (1Pet 2:22) – made it fitting that He should have an honorable burial instead of being thrown into a murderer's grave, as His enemies had in mind. He was given this grave of honor in view of the resurrection. The resurrection will be discussed in the next section.

### **Isa 53:10-12 | Results for the Servant**

*10 But the LORD was pleased  
To crush Him, putting [Him] to grief;  
If He would render Himself [as] a guilt offering,  
He will see [His] offspring,  
He will prolong [His] days,  
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.  
11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,  
He will see [it and] be satisfied;  
By His knowledge the Righteous One,  
My Servant, will justify the many,  
As He will bear their iniquities.  
12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,*

*And He will divide the booty with the strong;  
 Because He poured out Himself to death,  
 And was numbered with the transgressors;  
 Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,  
 And interceded for the transgressors.*

Verse 10. The last section of the chapter and also the last stanza gives a triple testimony concerning the experiences of His soul. We are brought into the inner sanctuary of His Being. So far we have seen especially the human and outer side of the Servant's suffering. Now comes the Divine side of it. Verse 10 and verse 12 speak of the acts of the LORD with Him, in a judicial sense with a view to His death and in a compensatory sense with a view to the reward. Verse 11 speaks of the result of His sacrifice to His own satisfaction and the justifying grace He grants to others.

The remnant must learn the lesson that the cross has two sides. The first side we have seen extensively, that is the side of man. Therein man in general and the Jews in particular are responsible for the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. This must penetrate to the heart and conscience of the remnant, which will happen fully when they see Him Whom they have pierced (Zec 12:10-14). The other side is the side of God. God has wanted to use this suffering for a higher purpose (cf. Gen 45:5; Acts 2:23).

If we are to understand, like the remnant, how God can justify sinners, we must understand God's side of the Servant's suffering. Only then we can have and experience peace with God.

The mention "the LORD was pleased to crush Him", speaks of the firm purpose of the LORD to use man's sin for the acts of His grace. He does this by adding the atoning suffering to the suffering of the sinless Servant on the cross. The pleasure of the LORD lies in the fact that through the crushing of His Son His good pleasure will be able to "prosper". The verse begins and ends with it.

This 'pleasure' is about the removal, through judgment, of the sins that were laid upon Him Who Himself was without sin. It is about full satisfaction of the demands of the holy and righteous God with respect to the guilt brought about by sin. That full satisfaction is given to Him by the

true Guilt Offering for sin (verse 10), Who can pay the penalty for people's guilt.

"Crush" is the terrible, destructive judgment on Him. He died not only because of what people did to Him, but because of what the LORD did to Him. It could be read in this way: It pleased the LORD not to leave the crushing of His Christ to men, but to execute it Himself. "Putting Him to grief", literally "made Him sick", is the indication for all the sorrows of the atoning suffering on the cross.

Rendering Himself as a guilt offering means that He offered Himself, His entire Being, as a victim to God to cleanse the sinner of his guilt. The guilt offering was brought in order to fulfill the demands of God's righteousness. This is the first mention relating to His soul – "He" is literally "His soul". This voluntary act of surrendering His life, a life that pleased God beyond compare, to fulfill God's righteous demands in view of man's guilt, has several results. They are results that Christ will see in the resurrection.

1. He will see offspring or seed (Psa 22:30). This is what the Israelite looked forward to as a great blessing (Gen 48:11; Psa 128:6). It seemed as if Christ had died. Here, however, we have an indication of the great joy of Christ when He sees the innumerable crowds of His spiritual offspring among Jews and Gentiles (Jn 12:24; Heb 2:13b).

2. He will prolong His days or have a long life. This is another blessing the Israelite particularly appreciated (Psa 91:16; Pro 3:2,16). However, here it is a reference to the endless resurrection life of the Lord (Rev 1:18).

3. The proposed counsels will have their joyous realization. "In His hand" refers to His work as Advocate and High Priest and also to the exercise of His authority and power in His kingdom. It is the pleasure of the LORD to bless His creatures. That now finds its fulfillment through Christ.

4. Verse 11. All the glory that follows is seen by Him as the result of His laborious effort or suffering, a glory that will never disappear from before His attention as absolutely necessary and perfectly sufficient to satisfy His heart in the redemption of those who have become His property.

5. "The anguish of His soul" applies to everything that He has suffered internally to the bottom of His heart, all the struggles and sufferings that



took place in Him, hidden from the eye of man. On this basis He will see it, which is the light of the resurrection, after the darkness of and His death on the cross. He will see it and “will be satisfied” (Psa 17:15).

6. There could be no justification of others, no imputing of righteousness, if He were not perfectly righteous, for only because of this He could willingly give Himself as an atoning offering. “By His knowledge” can mean “by the knowledge concerning or about Him” (objective) or “by the knowledge which is His own”, the knowledge which He Himself has (subjective). The second meaning has our preference. After all, the whole part is about Him and His excellencies.

7. The meaning of “will justify” can also be: He will teach many in righteousness. By the teaching He gives, there is spiritual growth. This spiritual growth manifests itself in becoming more and more like Him. He justifies all who come to God through Him, which can only be done by what follows: that He will bear their iniquities. Again we are brought back to the cross.

In summary, in this last point we find two aspects of the Lord’s work. First, in His life He taught many in righteousness, as in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Secondly, in His dying He has taken upon Himself and carried away the iniquities of those who believe.

Verse 12. There is another delightful consequence of His sacrificial death. What follows now resembles the triumphal march of the Romans after a victory. After the work of the Servant is finished, what He has done is now enumerated. What is written about His portion can be translated in two ways: The LORD will give Him a portion among many; or: He will receive the many as an inheritance: He will divide the powerful as a spoils, or better: He will share the booty with the strong, who are all connected with Him. With “the booty” we can think of the whole creation.

And again we are led to the reason, that is His atoning sacrifice. The establishment of His sovereign power on earth will rest on His accomplished work. All future glory is a consequence of and reward for what is described in four parts. He

1. poured out Himself, literally His soul – this is the third mention of His “soul” – to death (Jn 10:17; 19:30),

2. was numbered with the transgressors (Lk 22:37),
3. bore the sin of many (Heb 9:28) and
4. interceded for the transgressors (Lk 23:34a).

The last two parts are placed in contrast to the first two. The first two parts refer to the unjust opinion of those who condemned Him and handed Him over to be killed. They were not aware that He, in what He suffered on the cross, was the Bearer of the sins “of many” – that is, not of all people, but only of the believers. The last part refers especially to His intercession for the transgressors, while He hung on the cross (Lk 23:34a).

Thus the details of this prophecy in this chapter in the last three verses reach their climax. Isaiah himself did not understand the scope of his prophecy (1Pet 1:10). But the Spirit of Christ brought him to great heights by having him paint in great detail the work of the Servant, which He accomplished vicariously as a Guilt Offering for others.

The chapter ends with the cross and the intercession of the Lord Jesus because that will be forever in our attention as the origin of all blessing.

## Isaiah 54

### Introduction

This chapter is an outburst of jubilation and cheer after the prophecies about the suffering of the Servant of the LORD, the bearing of sins by Him and His glory thereafter in the previous chapter. These are the glorious consequences of what has been described in the previous chapter, with the core being that the Messiah has suffered and died as substitute for His people. Therefore the consequences are in the first place for that people. We see here the offspring the Lord Jesus will see (Isa 53:10). As a first sign of the full redemption we hear the singing of the redeemed (cf. Exo 15:1).

### Isa 54:1-3 | Joy of the Barren One

1 *"Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no [child];  
Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed;  
For the sons of the desolate one [will be] more numerous  
Than the sons of the married woman," says the LORD.*  
2 *"Enlarge the place of your tent;  
Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not;  
Lengthen your cords  
And strengthen your pegs.  
3 "For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left.  
And your descendants will possess nations  
And will resettle the desolate cities.*

Israel is called to rejoice with singing because her state of barrenness has changed into child bearing (verse 1). The experiences of the barren and later still childbearing arch-mother Sarah are a foreshadowing of this. The desolate condition of the people and their land will not be forever. The time will come when her children will be more numerous than they were before she was the desolate one.

There is also an application for us, believers of the church. Paul makes the comparison between the Jerusalem above and the earthly Jerusalem in

the present time and then quotes verse 1 of this chapter in his letter to the Galatians (Gal 4:26-27).

The jubilation of verse 1 will sound when the earthly Jerusalem is restored in her relationship with the LORD. This relates especially to the realm of peace. Therefore she is commanded to enlarge the place for her tent and to stretch out the curtains of her tent dwelling (verse 2). She must enlarge her area in order to be able to accommodate the population explosion. This promise of increase is given to her (verse 3). What is said here, we see in the *aliyah* or the return of the tribes from the scattering to the land.

Paul, who was – remarkably in this context – a *tent-maker* by profession (Acts 18:3), has also made his area for the spreading of the gospel ever larger (2Cor 10:15b-16a). God is a God of expansion. With Him there is place for everyone who surrenders to Him. For example, in the Father’s house there are “many dwelling places” (Jn 14:2). Israel’s area will be larger than in the time of Solomon (Gen 15:18; 28:14). They will become the head of the nations and rule over those who oppressed them (Mic 4:1-3). The cities destroyed by the king of the North will be repopulated.

Such are the ways of the Lord. Widening will follow diminishing when His discipline has done its work. If the disciplined believer learns more about the reality of what was accomplished at Calvary and bows before Him in self-judgment, spiritual expansion will be the sure consequence. Barrenness and impoverishment give way to fertility that erupts in abundance to the glory of the Lord and to the enrichment and blessing of others.

### **Isa 54:4-8 | Compassion**

4 *“Fear not, for you will not be put to shame;  
And do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced;  
But you will forget the shame of your youth,  
And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.*  
5 *“For your husband is your Maker,  
Whose name is the LORD of hosts;  
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,  
Who is called the God of all the earth.*  
6 *“For the LORD has called you,*

*Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,  
 Even like a wife of [one's] youth when she is rejected,"  
 Says your God.  
 7 "For a brief moment I forsook you,  
 But with great compassion I will gather you.  
 8 "In an outburst of anger  
 I hid My face from you for a moment,  
 But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,"  
 Says the LORD your Redeemer.*

The section that follows now is full of the most tender promises and comfort. We read about the "everlasting lovingkindness" (verse 8) of the LORD and of His "great compassion" (verse 7) by virtue of His covenant and the glorious future that lies ahead for the people. Israel no longer needs to fear, for the people will no longer be put to shame (verse 4).

It looked like she would be desolate forever, but that will turn out to be wrong. The shame of her widowhood will also be taken away. As a widow and a forsaken wife she will be restored, she will be accepted again and she will be married again. Her future will be so joyous that she will forget the shame of her youth, that is the time of her slavery in Egypt. There she is like a virgin bound by the LORD to Himself with a covenant of love (Jer 2:2; Eze 16:60).

She will also not remember the reproach of her widowhood, which is the time of her exile in Babylon (Jer 51:5), for her "husband" is none other than her "Maker" (verse 5). He Who became her Husband also originated her. Her Creator entered into a love relationship with her. He is "the LORD of hosts", Who commands the heavenly and earthly hosts what they must do.

He is also their "Redeemer" to Whom the whole earth belongs and Who is therefore also able to provide it with all that it needs. He is her Redeemer, Who has redeemed her from the power of all her enemies, gives her back the inheritance and connects with her in marriage. He is what Boaz was to Ruth, the Redeemer, Who is also her Husband (Rth 4:1-13; Hos 2:16).

Her relationship with Him has suffered greatly because of her unfaithfulness. But the LORD will call her back to Himself (verse 6). He takes her back, just as a man takes back the woman he loved in his youth. She has

displeased Him, but she is not like a hated one. To the LORD the time in which He had to forsake her, the time of her exile that seemed a long time to her (Lam 5:20), is “a brief moment” (verse 7).

It may seem a long time to the remnant, but there will come an even longer period of time, an “everlasting lovingkindness” (verse 8; Psa 30:5a; cf. 2Cor 4:17), in which they will enjoy God’s “great compassion” (verse 7). This is in contrast to the brief moment of God’s “outburst of anger”.

### **Isa 54:9-10 | An Unshakable Covenant**

*9 “For this is like the days of Noah to Me,  
When I swore that the waters of Noah  
Would not flood the earth again;  
So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you  
Nor will I rebuke you.  
10 “For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake,  
But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,  
And My covenant of peace will not be shaken,”  
Says the LORD who has compassion on you.*

Then the LORD gives the assurance that He will never be angry with Israel again, just as He gave such an assurance to Noah concerning the flood (verse 9; Gen 9:11). Just as a rainbow then underscored that assurance (Gen 9:16), so now He speaks of “My covenant of peace” as something that will never be taken away. That covenant can be there because the punishment that brings them peace was on Him (Isa 53:5). The covenant cannot be broken. It is an everlasting covenant because it is based on the blood of the new covenant He has shed.

Whatever may change or succumb, not His lovingkindness for His people, for He is “the LORD who has compassion” on them (verse 10). Just as Noah and his family come to a new earth after the flood, so God’s redeemed people will enter after the great tribulation the blessing of the millennial realm of peace on a renewed earth.

### **Isa 54:11-17 | Zion Untouchable**

*11 “O afflicted one, storm-tossed, [and] not comforted,*

*Behold, I will set your stones in antimony,  
 And your foundations I will lay in sapphires.  
 12 "Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies,  
 And your gates of crystal,  
 And your entire wall of precious stones.  
 13 "All your sons will be taught of the LORD;  
 And the well-being of your sons will be great.  
 14 "In righteousness you will be established;  
 You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear;  
 And from terror, for it will not come near you.  
 15 "If anyone fiercely assails [you] it will not be from Me.  
 Whoever assails you will fall because of you.  
 16 "Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals  
 And brings out a weapon for its work;  
 And I have created the destroyer to ruin.  
 17 "No weapon that is formed against you will prosper;  
 And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn.  
 This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,  
 And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD.*

These verses describe the future glory and happiness of God's earthly people. This is done in a wonderful variety of ways that serve to present the coming deliverance and its consequences as opposed to the present misery. This last state we see in the beginning of verse 11.

The "afflicted one" or the oppressed one shows how she has been under the antichrist in the great tribulation. "Storm-tossed" represents the hostile powers – the king of the North – who, under the leadership of satan, have battered God's people to destroy them. "Not comforted" shows that she was without comforter. She had to undergo the judgment of Lo-Ammi, which means 'not My people' (Hos 1:9), and was therefore deprived of the comfort of God. But the LORD will make Jerusalem shine and give it an unshakeable foundation of precious stones. The stones are set in "antimony" and the foundation are laid in "sapphires".

The treasures of the earth, which man dells to his own glory, reflect the features of God and of Christ and will serve for this purpose in the realm of peace. We see this, for example, in the "battlements of rubies". The ruby

has a blood red color and is a reminder of the blood of Christ and the work of reconciliation. Then all that has been created under the reign of the Lord Jesus fulfills its true purpose. The city will shine because of all the earthly glory that the LORD has given her and with which He adorns her like a bride (verse 12; cf. Rev 21:18-21). All this glory is reminiscent of the glory of Christ.

In the reflection of the glory of Christ, the children of Jerusalem will be “sons” taught as pupils by the LORD (verse 13). The stones are called “sons” here. As pupils of the LORD they shall resemble the true servant of the LORD, the Messiah, Who was also the true Pupil, or Disciple (Isa 50:4; cf. Isa 8:16). They will not need human education to behave like sons.

Taught by God (Jn 6:45; 1Thes 4:9), they will come to acknowledge sin, and love will be their common feature after conversion. They will not have to teach each other about this (Jer 31:34). That teaching is given to them by directing their eye toward the perfect Pupil, or Disciple, the perfect Servant. All this happiness, all this salvation, all this blessing will be enjoyed on the basis of Divine righteousness (verse 14).

They will no longer be oppressed by enemies. Oppression will be far away from them. They need not fear a repetition of their affliction through the hand of nations sent by the LORD, such as Assyria and Babylon. If the enemies attempt to attack them anyway, it will mean the fall of those nations themselves through the people of God (verse 15). Jerusalem will be impregnable. All things are in the hand of the LORD (verse 16). There is no power in the world that can stand against God, because that power is created by Him (cf. Est 7:6-10).

That may be of comfort to us. He is always stronger than the power that is against us. Therefore, no weapon formed against His people will be used successfully (verse 17). He uses His creative power to defend His people. He will also give them the words to defend themselves against any accusation.

The closing lines of the chapter list all preceding promises and describe them as “the heritage of the servants of the LORD”. The Servant of the LORD, the Lord Jesus, has deserved everything; it is His righteous reward; the servants of the LORD, Israel, share in it by grace. He is entitled to it



because righteousness is His own; they receive that right or that righteousness by grace.

While the true Servant Himself is the Righteous, the righteousness given to the people is based on grace: ""Their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD." In this way Jerusalem will be established. Israel will not be able to claim anything as a result of its own merit, any more than we, who are "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24), can.

## Isaiah 55

### **Isa 55:1-3 | Invitation**

1 *“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters;  
And you who have no money come, buy and eat.  
Come, buy wine and milk  
Without money and without cost.*

2 *“Why do you spend money for what is not bread,  
And your wages for what does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,  
And delight yourself in abundance.*

3 *“Incline your ear and come to Me.  
Listen, that you may live;  
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  
[According to] the faithful mercies shown to David.*

After the work of the Servant is accomplished (Isaiah 53), the blessings of the new covenant can come richly to Israel (Isaiah 54). The blessings then flow so abundantly that they go beyond the borders of Israel. For Israel, this day is a day of joy. That is why they must not remain silent (cf. 2Kgs 7:9) and must pass on the blessings. They invite others (verse 1).

The prophet now makes an invitation to come and participate in the spiritual providence that the LORD has made for those who willingly turn away from their own plans and actions in order to listen diligently to His voice. The invitation begins with the exclamation “Ho!” – Hebrew *hoy*. This expression is usually used for mourning or judgment, but here it is positive and is an exclamation for those who are spiritually distant. In the call in verse 1 the invitation “come” – Hebrew *halach*, literally “go” – sounds three times.

The first to be called are “every one who thirsts”. This points, as the verses afterward also show, to everyone, both the still scattered Israelites and all nations in the future. The only condition to be allowed to come is to be

thirsty. Thirst is the longing for God (Psa 42:2a). In our time it applies to ourselves.

To the thirsty sounds the invitation: "Come to the waters." To which waters? Where should they go? The answer is: to the Rock, that is Christ (1Cor 10:4). Because that the Rock has been smitten (Isa 53:10), the water flows abundantly and all who are thirsty can go to the Rock to receive water (Jn 7:37).

The second "come" we hear in the invitation to buy and eat, "come, buy and eat". How to do that? How to obtain salvation? By buying, which means that there is a personal act involved. That does not mean that good works have to be done, because the sequel reads buy "without money and without cost". However, it is not free, because the price has been paid by Another, namely the Servant of the LORD. It is a price so high, that no one but He could pay it (Psa 49:7-8).

The third time is "come, buy wine and milk". What should they buy? Wine and milk. Wine speaks of the joy of salvation. For Israel and the nations in the realm of peace, it is the blessings of the new covenant, including forgiveness of sins and new life. Milk then speaks of spiritual food, which is the Word of God needed by the new life in order to grow (1Pet 2:2).

It is clear that it is not literally about water, wine and milk. They are pictures of higher things than natural products. The true food and drink are the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus He gave on the cross for the life of the world (Jn 6:51). The LORD offers the water of life for free, without cost (Rev 22:17b). The spiritual meaning of water is mentioned in Isaiah 44, where reference is made to the Holy Spirit (Isa 44:3; cf. Jn 7:38-39). Wine has also been mentioned earlier (Isa 25:6-7) and is a picture of joy (Psa 104:15). In the same way we must understand the mention of milk (see the previous paragraph).

You can buy "without money and without cost". It is all Divine grace. From the point of view of the recipient, the possession of spiritual blessings depends only on the sense of need and a willingness to accept them. Buying without money presupposes spiritual bankruptcy. Nothing more is expected of one's own effort (Rom 11:6). Israel has invested money and work in idols. Hence the serious appeal expressed at the beginning of the

chapter in the exclamation “Ho!” This exclamation is not just an invitation, but sheds light on the state of affairs of those who pursue their own interests instead of listening to the voice of the LORD.

The LORD continues His call with the gracious words of verse 2. The satisfaction of the soul is obtained through the obedience of faith. If we listen diligently to the voice of the Lord and do His will, we can enjoy true spiritual joy. Often we hesitate to obey Him. We then give a lot of time and energy to things that occupy us but are not food for the soul, which are not the true bread for the heart.

What God says here goes beyond meeting our needs. He wants to give us abundant satisfaction. This is “the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7). Then He asks His people to turn their ear to Him to listen and come to Him, that their souls may live (verse 3). Something similar He also says to the church in Laodicea (Rev 3:20).

The call “come” in verse 3 is the fourth call to come, after the three times in verse 1. It is now: “Come to Me.” Now it is clear. The beaten Rock, from which water comes, and the abundant wine and milk, refer to and are available from a Person, a Seller Who sells without money. That Person is the Servant of the LORD, risen from the dead, Whose work is finished, and Who is now the source of all grace, the source of all God’s blessings.

Although in these first three verses there is much that can be applied to the gospel, it is primarily a call to those who are spiritually distant. They are souls in need of revival which can only be experienced by returning to the LORD.

The LORD connects a promise to the conversion of His people. In human affairs a covenant is made that is ratified by each of the parties. Here the LORD shows that He is free to give the blessings of the covenant to those who come to Him. This can happen because Another, namely the Servant of the LORD, has taken upon Himself the obligations of the covenant. Therefore, this covenant is in reality a promise that will surely be fulfilled (cf. Gal 3:17-18).

“The faithful mercies shown to David” are, according to Acts 13, where this verse is quoted from the Septuagint, “THE HOLY [and] SURE [blessings] OF DAVID” (Acts 13:34) which are based on the resurrection of Christ. The

resurrection of Christ makes the mercies trustworthy. Here the mercies are the abundant blessings of the new covenant. Paul uses this quotation as the second of three Old Testament quotations that prove that they have been fulfilled in Christ. The first refers to His birth (Acts 13:33), the second to His resurrection (Acts 13:34) and the third to His imperishableness (Acts 13:35).

We also see here a reference to God's faithful mercies regarding His promises to David (2Sam 7:12-16). The covenant of Moses is no longer mentioned, but the covenant with David. It is as if the LORD wants to point here to the covenant which is based on the work of the Servant, Who is also the Son of David.

### **Isa 55:4-5 | Dominion of David**

4 *"Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples,  
A leader and commander for the peoples.*  
5 *"Behold, you will call a nation you do not know,  
And a nation which knows you not will run to you,  
Because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel;  
For He has glorified you."*

What David was, the true David will be. In verse 4 David is a type of Christ, of Him Who is more than David, the Son of David. Christ is the God-given "witness to the peoples" and their "leader and commander" (cf. Eze 34:24; 37:24). David was "leader and commander", but the Son of David is also "witness to the peoples". This is not so much a witness in a trial, but a Witness Who reveals the truth of God to the peoples (Jn 18:37).

When Christ has world domination, He will call a nation that did not know Him, which is what the nations in general characterized (verse 5). The nations will run to Him because of "the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel", for what He has done to His people. He deserves all honor for that.

This makes clear that the Son of David is also the Son of Abraham (Mt 1:1), to whom it is said: "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 22:18a). In the present time, the time that Israel has fallen, salvation has already come to the nations. How much more the fulness of

Israel – and that is what these verses are about – will be the salvation of the nations (Rom 11:11-12).

### **Isa 55:6-9 | Call to Seek the LORD**

*6 Seek the LORD while He may be found;  
Call upon Him while He is near.*

*7 Let the wicked forsake his way  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And let him return to the LORD,  
And He will have compassion on him,  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon.*

*8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.*

*9 “For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

In verse 6 there is a general call to the astray to seek the LORD while He is still to be found. There comes a moment when the time of grace will be over. Then they will seek, but will not find Him. Already in the days of Cyrus that call sounds. For all those who do not answer and remain in Babylon, the LORD becomes the forgotten God. Also for the Jews and the nations in the great tribulation, this message is a last call, before it is too late. God’s patience comes to an end. The door of the ark will be closed once. This applies to the world, it also applies to every person in his or her life.

The one who has gone astray is called to forsake “his way” and “his thoughts” and to return to the LORD (verse 7). On his return he is awaited by a God Who has compassion and abundantly pardons – literally ‘He multiplies forgiveness’. These are the voluntariness and fullness of Divine grace for the truly repentant sinner.

The thoughts and ways of the one who has gone astray form a great contrast with the thoughts and ways of the LORD (verses 8-9). The whole of this magnificent prophecy concerning the death and resurrection of Christ

and the glorious results thereof are completely above all human thoughts and ways (1Cor 2:9).

### Isa 55:10-11 | God's Word Accomplishes What He Desires

*10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
And do not return there without watering the earth*

*And making it bear and sprout,*

*And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;*

*11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;*

*It will not return to Me empty,*

*Without accomplishing what I desire,*

*And without succeeding [in the matter] for which I sent it.*

In these verses His words are added to His thoughts and His ways, through which He reveals and makes known His thoughts and His ways. Just as He has absolute control over the rain and the snow and what the earth produces and to which man is utterly powerless to change anything, so His word will go forth from His mouth. Thus His thoughts will be fulfilled, in grace! Let us remember that God's thoughts are too numerous to count (Psa 40:5) and that His thoughts are always full of peace and a blessed future (Jer 29:11).

It is with His word as with the rain and the snow through which He cultivates fertility. When they have done that work, they rise again as vapor. Likewise, His word will not return without having done what He sent it to do. He who opens his heart as fertile ground and receives and absorbs the Word will show its effect in his life. It does its work there. God's word is fruitful and powerful, which will never fail in the purpose to which He sends it, either in grace or in judgment (cf. Heb 6:7-8).

His word is His messenger (Isa 9:8; Psa 107:20; 147:15,18). His word is presented here as a person. It runs like a quick messenger and fulfills God's will with all the vibrant power, both in nature and in the midst of people.

A word is the expression of a thought. Christ is called the Word of God. He has explained God (Jn 1:18). Through the word that emanates from God, one lives (Deu 8:3). Just as what comes out of the soil of the earth was

produced by rain and snow, so it is with the soil of the heart of man and the word of God.

### **Isa 55:12-13 | Joy, Peace and Prosperity**

*12 "For you will go out with joy  
And be led forth with peace;  
The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you,  
And all the trees of the field will clap [their] hands.  
13 "Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up,  
And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up,  
And it will be a memorial to the LORD,  
For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off."*

In verse 12 the LORD graciously applies the principles related to His Word to the promise of the ineffable blessing for Israel in the coming day. He makes His Word true to a remnant according to His gracious choice that He will bring back to the land. This will take place when "the times of the Gentiles" (Lk 21:24) are over. All activities of life will be carried out through this remnant in peace without fearful haste. They will never again have to make their way through hostile armies or flee from them.

Not only mankind, but also nature will have been brought into harmony with God's gracious purposes. There will be harmony between nature rejoicing (Psa 98:8) and the hearts of God's redeemed rejoicing ones. Instead of that jubilation, creation now sighs because of the curse that has come on it through sin (Rom 8:22). What reminds us of sin, the "thorn bush" and the "nettle" resulting from the fall of man into sin (Gen 3:18), will give way to the mighty, imperishable cypress and the humble, sweet-smelling, evergreen myrtle (verse 13). These trees will be a remembrance of all the goodness of the LORD. The whole of the realm of peace will be an everlasting remembrance of the LORD. His glory and His features and acts of grace and power constitute the blessing of the realm of peace.



## Isaiah 56

### Introduction

The opening words of this chapter are a repetition of the admonition in the previous chapter (Isa 55:6-7). The thoughts and ways of Israel are not those of the LORD (Isa 55:8). The precious promises that follow in that chapter are an exhortation for those living in sin to leave their ways and for the unrighteous to give up their thoughts.

In the previous chapter we heard the invitation – four times “come” – to receive the blessings of the new covenant. In the next two chapters, Isaiah 56-57, which is the final part of the second part, Isaiah 49-57, we can recognize the response to this invitation. First, in the pious nations who will be introduced into the kingdom of God, Isaiah 56:1-8, and second, in the wicked Israelites who will be banished from that same kingdom, Isaiah 56:9 to Isaiah 57:21. In these two groups we recognize the fulfillment of the words of the Lord Jesus to the centurion of Capernaum (Mt 8:11-12; 19:30).

### Isa 56:1-2 | Do Righteousness

*1 Thus says the LORD,  
“Preserve justice and do righteousness,  
For My salvation is about to come  
And My righteousness to be revealed.  
2 “How blessed is the man who does this,  
And the son of man who takes hold of it;  
Who keeps from profaning the sabbath,  
And keeps his hand from doing any evil.”*

Let them “preserve justice” and “do righteousness” (verse 1). Then they will be in accordance with the attributes and actions that apply to God’s kingdom. The reason why they should do this is twofold: the kingdom will soon become public in salvation as well as in righteousness. When they realize how near His salvation is and that His righteous acts are about to be revealed, they will be encouraged to persevere.

A special blessing is promised to him who keeps God's commandment (verse 2). Of all God's commandments, the sabbath commandment is mentioned here as an illustration of keeping God's commandments. This is the best test of whether someone really wants to keep them. He who loves the LORD shall keep them. In addition, the sabbath is also a sign of the covenant (Eze 20:12) in connection with the new covenant. Keeping the sabbath reveals the mind of the heart that wants to do righteousness. It is open, not only to the Israelites, but to every "son of man" (verse 2), i.e. also to those from the nations.

Besides keeping from profaning the sabbath the LORD also speaks about keeping the hand from doing any evil. The hand speaks of deeds. He who lives internally (heart) and externally (hand) in accordance with God is "blessed".

For us, the sabbath is the peace in Christ, which we can only enjoy if our hand does not do evil.

#### **Isa 56:3-8 | Foreigner and Eunuch**

*3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,  
"The LORD will surely separate me from His people."*

*Nor let the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."*

*4 For thus says the LORD,*

*"To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths,*

*And choose what pleases Me,*

*And hold fast My covenant,*

*5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial,*

*And a name better than that of sons and daughters;*

*I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.*

*6 "Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,*

*To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD,*

*To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath*

*And holds fast My covenant;*

*7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain*

*And make them joyful in My house of prayer.*

*Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar;*

*For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."*

8 The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares,  
 “Yet [others] I will gather to them, to those [already] gathered.”

Verse 3 mentions the two kinds of people who are outside the promises of Israel. The first is “the foreigner”. This is the foreigner by origin but who has come to live in the land and knows the LORD. He has joined the Jewish people – such a person is called “proselyte” – and maintains the Jewish laws. There are such people in Babylon. The foreigner might think that the call to go back to the land of Israel does not apply to him.

But he need not fear that the LORD will separate him from His people and rob him of the privileges he has enjoyed. The “blessed” of verse 2 applies to all men, all mortals, who fulfill the conditions of verse 1. It is not his genealogy that is decisive, but the question whether he preserves justice and does righteousness as mentioned in verse 1.

The second is the “the eunuch”. The law forbids him, even though he is an Israelite, to become part of God’s people (Deu 23:1). He can think he cannot be part of it because he knows his own condition as eunuch. Just as a dry tree bears no fruit, a eunuch one cannot conceive offspring.

However, the LORD has an encouraging word for “the eunuchs” who cling to His covenant (verse 4). Their fears will prove to be unfounded. They are allowed to be in His house. He even gives them the promise of a memorial and a name that are better than that of sons and daughters (verse 5). Anyone who thinks he is only a second-rate believer, someone who thinks he is underprivileged, not in count, gets an extra encouragement here.

We may gratefully accept this encouragement and pass it on to others. Every member of His people is one for whom the Lord Jesus has given His life. Their name will never be eradicated, but will be known to God forever (cf. Rev 3:12). It is not about who they are originally, but what they have become in Him.

If they keep from profaning the sabbath (verse 6), God will bring them to His holy mountain and give them joy in His house of prayer (verse 7). He will destroy any barrier to fellowship. They will be a full part of the congregation of Israel. He will accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices on His altar, for His house will be called “a house of prayer for all the peoples” (cf. Mt 21:13). And He Who in the future brings together the dispersed, will

still bring together more people (verse 8). The LORD will bring together these dispersed, the eunuchs, the scattered of Israel, the ten tribes, as well as the others, the nations.

This also applies to today. The gospel continues and every day many throughout the world come to repentance (Acts 2:47). They come to His house, the New Testament church of the living God. The church is also first and foremost a house of prayer (1Tim 2:1-2).

### **Isa 56:9-12 | Judgment on the Wicked**

*9 All you beasts of the field,  
All you beasts in the forest,  
Come to eat.  
10 His watchmen are blind,  
All of them know nothing.  
All of them are mute dogs unable to bark,  
Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber;  
11 And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied.  
And they are shepherds who have no understanding;  
They have all turned to their own way,  
Each one to his unjust gain, to the last one.  
12 "Come," [they say], "let us get wine, and let  
us drink heavily of strong drink;  
And tomorrow will be like today, only more so."*

With verse 9 begins a new section that continues through Isaiah 57. We are in a quite different atmosphere with a quite different tone. It is no longer about restoration, but about judgment. While the faithful nations and outcasts are being saved, judgment goes to the apostates in Israel, the followers of the antichrist. The beasts, that is the Assyrians under the leadership of the king of the North, are called upon to feast on the unbelieving part of the people of Israel (verse 9).

This is due to the attitude of their leaders, who are watchmen of the people and have the task to warn the people of danger. The safety of the people, however, is not at all their concern (cf. Jer 6:17). They are blind to it (verse 10). They think only of their own convenience and enjoyment. They dream,

lie down, slumber and are blind to spiritual values and reality. It is from this attitude, as it were, that the call goes out to the beasts to come and devour them. The LORD never judges without showing the righteousness of judgment. He does so by revealing the moral condition of the people and their leaders.

These leaders only awaken from their own ease when they can indulge in pleasure-seeking, revels and drinking bouts (verse 11). They are dogs that fatten themselves to satisfy their lust for pleasure, but they cannot bark to warn the people. They are worthless shepherds. They go their own way, the way that gives them the most. If there is any thought of tomorrow, then only to revel even more (verse 12).

All those who have been given a responsibility by the Lord Jesus to take care of His flock as shepherds must guard against a gradual decrease in their obligations toward the flock. They must also guard against lording over the herd or seeking sordid gain (1Pet 5:2-3).

The situation outlined above also applies to today. Who still has the courage to take spiritual responsibility and to warn against the secularism of the church, against all kinds of modern idols such as psychology, the prosperity gospel, cultic fashion, for wolves in sheep's clothing who spread error under the cover of Christendom? Who still warns the young people in the church against the charismatic errors of our time, such as speaking in tongues, visions and so-called prophetic messages? On the other hand, there must be a call to study God's Word for themselves in order not to fall prey to every wind of doctrine.

## Isaiah 57

### **Isa 57:1-2 | No One Understands**

*1 The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart;  
And devout men are taken away, while no one understands.  
For the righteous man is taken away from evil,  
2 He enters into peace;  
They rest in their beds,  
[Each one] who walked in his upright way.*

Contrary to the worthless watchmen, that is, the shepherds and leaders of the previous chapter, who are only interested in satisfying their own bellies, there is “the righteous man” who is distinguished by being taken away before the judgment of God erupts (verse 1). An example of this is the God-fearing King Josiah. The wicked mass, however, does not care about the righteous man, he is pushed away. When “devout men” die, their death and disappearance has no effect at all. One does not let oneself be warned by it that the Judge is standing at the door.

The characteristic of righteous and devout people is that they are God-fearing or pious. They go in peace and rest in peace (verse 2). While the wicked suffer from everything that happens around them and with them, the pious lose nothing of what God has promised them. They die in faith and enjoy the eternal peace of the righteous made perfect (Heb 12:23).

It is one thing to see that righteous people die and then ask questions about whether that is right and involve the power of God. This is a problem that concerns Bible writers and every believer at times. We see this clearly in the book of Job. If the suffering and disappearance of good people does not call for an explanation and does not affect anything in the heart, that is another thing. Then faith in God has in fact been replaced by atheism, although one also adheres to religious institutions. From this atheistic attitude all other evil and abuse of which the prophet speaks stems.

### **Isa 57:3-9 | The Sins of the People**

| 3 *“But come here, you sons of a sorceress,*

*Offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute.*

*4 "Against whom do you jest?*

*Against whom do you open wide your mouth*

*And stick out your tongue?*

*Are you not children of rebellion,*

*Offspring of deceit,*

*5 [Who] inflame yourselves among the oaks,*

*Under every luxuriant tree,*

*Who slaughter the children in the ravines,*

*Under the clefts of the crags?*

*6 "Among the smooth [stones] of the ravine*

*Is your portion, they are your lot;*

*Even to them you have poured out a drink offering,*

*You have made a grain offering.*

*Shall I relent concerning these things?*

*7 "Upon a high and lofty mountain*

*You have made your bed.*

*You also went up there to offer sacrifice.*

*8 "Behind the door and the doorpost*

*You have set up your sign;*

*Indeed, far removed from Me, you have uncovered yourself,*

*And have gone up and made your bed wide.*

*And you have made an agreement for yourself with them,*

*You have loved their bed,*

*You have looked on [their] manhood.*

*9 "You have journeyed to the king with oil*

*And increased your perfumes;*

*You have sent your envoys a great distance*

*And made [them] go down to Sheol.*

There follows a striking change in the expressions of the prophet. In the preceding verses, starting with Isaiah 56:9, he first addressed the leaders. Now he is going to address the people. Not only the leaders are responsible. Although they have a greater responsibility, the people are also responsible for their own actions. The people are addressed about two sins:

idolatry and adultery. These two are also mentioned together in the New Testament (Rev 2:20; 1Cor 6:9).

First there is a warning for the evildoers to come closer and listen to the voice of God (verses 3-4). They are addressed as “sons of a sorceress” – occultism, demon worship – and as “offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute”, as children of sin, the brood of lies. From this they derive their character, as is more often in Scripture one’s moral character is drawn by referring to one’s father or mother or both (1Sam 20:30; 2Kgs 6:32; Job 30:8).

Everything that follows in verses 5-11 is addressed to those who have gone into exile and prophetically to those who have become followers of the antichrist. They practice various forms of tree worship, in which the various trees are seen as special homes of various deities (verse 5). In this idolatry horrible rituals take place.

In verse 6 there is mention of the worship of stones and the drink offering that is poured out to them. All this is compared with spiritual adultery, the being unfaithful to the LORD (verses 7-9). They find peace on high and lofty places that they have climbed to offer sacrifices to their idols (verse 7). They undergo all kinds of initiations in the higher world in order to assure themselves of business success. It does not occur to them that thereby they surrender themselves to demonic powers.

Behind the doors and posts of their houses on which they have written God’s Word (Deu 6:6,9), they have placed their own “sign” (verse 8). There they live their lives of debauchery and adultery. The unbelieving Israel goes in the future with the oil of worship to “the king” – or: Molech – that is the antichrist. Child sacrifices are brought to Molech (Lev 18:21; 2Kgs 23:10). Molech is literally Melech, which means king, as it is translated here. Today children are sacrificed to the idols ‘career’ and ‘pleasure’.

To strengthen themselves against the enemy, they send their “envoys a great distance”, to make a covenant with “Sheol” (verse 9; Isa 28:15). It is a covenant with the devil “who had the power of death” (Heb 2:14) and who manifests himself in the form of the ruler of the Roman Empire, the beast of the sea.

Idolatry and adultery are also great dangers for us. Idolatry is everything that displaces the living and true God in our lives from the first place. The



apostle John warns us: “Little children, guard yourselves from idols” (1Jn 5:21). The apostle Paul speaks about “greed, which is idolatry” and says that we have to deal with it radically (Col 3:5). Idolatry is closely related to adultery, an adherence to something other than God.

### Isa 57:10-13 | Lying Righteousness

10 *“You were tired out by the length of your road,  
[Yet] you did not say, ‘It is hopeless.’  
You found renewed strength,  
Therefore you did not faint.*

11 *“Of whom were you worried and fearful  
When you lied, and did not remember Me  
Nor give [Me] a thought?  
Was I not silent even for a long time  
So you do not fear Me?*

12 *“I will declare your righteousness and your deeds,  
But they will not profit you.*

13 *“When you cry out, let your collection [of idols] deliver you.  
But the wind will carry all of them up,  
[And] a breath will take [them away].  
But he who takes refuge in Me will inherit the land  
And will possess My holy mountain.”*

All this wickedness requires a lot of work and effort (verse 10), but the people like it to make that effort. They seek new strength from the powers of darkness and not from the LORD (cf. Isa 40:31). It is possible that “the length of” their “road” has to do with making a second covenant with the united Europe under the leadership of the beast from Rome (Dan 9:27), with whom Israel is forging ever stronger ties.

They have deviated so far from the LORD that they no longer think of Him (verse 11). Instead of recognizing the hopelessness of their situation, they find new forces to continue to make connections with the heathen. The LORD did not intervene directly, but let them go their way. He has kept silent. Because He has not yet intervened in judgment, they do not fear God either (Ecc 8:11).

But He does not remain silent. When He begins to speak, He points out to them the folly of their actions. The mention “I will declare your righteousness” (verse 12) does not imply that those with whom God has a dispute are themselves righteous. Quite the contrary is the case. It concerns what Israel, in his blind state, regards as his own righteousness. It is a false righteousness. Its true character will be revealed by God, which means exhibited and judged by Him. This is confirmed by what follows in verse 13a.

Halfway through verse 13 the LORD addresses Himself to the faithful among His people, a rest, a remnant. For us, to “inherit the land” speaks of taking possession of the blessings in the heavenly places, while to “possess My holy mountain” speaks of enjoying fellowship with Him.

### **Isa 57:14-15 | The Dwelling Place of the LORD**

*14 And it will be said,  
“Build up, build up, prepare the way,  
Remove [every] obstacle out of the way of My people.”  
15 For thus says the high and exalted One  
Who lives forever, whose name is Holy,  
“I dwell [on] a high and holy place,  
And [also] with the contrite and lowly of spirit  
In order to revive the spirit of the lowly  
And to revive the heart of the contrite.*

The call of verse 14 prepares the way for the return of the remnant from exile mentioned in verse 13. They will inherit the land. Isaiah 62 sheds light on this (Isa 62:10), where the final gathering of Israel from the nations is anticipated. “[Every] obstacle” speaks of every kind of hindrance that can stand in the way of the return of the people.

In the last section of the chapter the LORD gives a message in which glory and grace are combined. It concerns His dual dwelling place: the high and holy place in heaven and the contrite and lowly of spirit on earth (verse 15). Here His second dwelling place is not the tabernacle or temple in the midst of His people, but a remnant with the mentioned characteristics. They are “the poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3). Such people have nothing more to

offer than the complete bankruptcy of their life. The latter will be the condition of His earthly people after their restoration.

If we humble ourselves “under the mighty hand of God” (1Pet 5:6), He will raise us up, or as Isaiah says here, He will revive our spirit and our heart. Contrition and humiliation are cause and effect.

### Isa 57:16-21 | Peace for the God-fearing

16 *“For I will not contend forever,  
Nor will I always be angry;  
For the spirit would grow faint before Me,  
And the breath [of those whom] I have made.*  
17 *“Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry and struck him;  
I hid [My face] and was angry,  
And he went on turning away, in the way of his heart.*  
18 *“I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;  
I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners,  
19 Creating the praise of the lips.  
Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near,”  
Says the LORD, “and I will heal him.”*  
20 *But the wicked are like the tossing sea,  
For it cannot be quiet,  
And its waters toss up refuse and mud.*  
21 *“There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”*

If the LORD would constantly contend and always be angry, the spirit of the object of His righteous anger would grow faint before Him (verse 16). He did not create man to let him die. That will be the fate of the mass who does not repent. God makes His plan come true to a remnant that has the features that allow Him to take His true and full place in heart and life.

Here the LORD clearly reminds us that the existence of the soul is due to His creative power. This is at the same time a touching call to contrite and humiliate before His face. The LORD makes the promise to Israel that, having stricken them because of their greed and the turning away of their heart (verse 17), He will heal him, lead him and restore comfort to him

(verse 18). This will be especially for the mourners, those who grieve over their own aberration and not primarily over all the injustices in the world.

Verses 19-21 show that the consequences of God's actions will divide the people in two parts. For those who are contrite and humiliated, who mourn their sins, there will be "peace, peace" in their contrite state, both to him who is "far" and to him who is "near" (verse 19; cf. Eph 2:17). The doubling of the word "peace" means complete and uninterrupted peace, "perfect peace" (Isa 26:3). This will produce worship and songs of praise. Hence, the promise of peace is preceded by the statement that God is "creating the praise of the lips".

On the other hand, there are the wicked, the unrepentant, the followers of the antichrist, for whom "there is no peace" (verses 20-21).

## **Isaiah 58**

### **Introduction**

#### **Overview main part 2.3 – Isaiah 58-66**

#### **God as Judge and Savior**

The third part of the second main part (Isaiah 40-66) contains Isaiah 58-66 and can be divided as follows:

1. True fasting (Isaiah 58)
2. Sin, grief and salvation (Isaiah 59)
3. The future glory of Zion (Isaiah 60)
4. The year of the favor of the LORD (Isaiah 61)
5. Convinced prayer for the future of Zion (Isaiah 62)
6. The LORD, the Avenger (Isaiah 63:1-6)
7. A psalm of praise and lamentation (Isaiah 63:7-64:12)
8. The great final decisions (Isaiah 65-66)

#### **Introduction to Isaiah 58**

With Isaiah 58 a new series of prophecies begins. The first part of it is remarkably similar to what preceded, namely admonition, warning and promise. However, the emphasis in this part is on the future realization of God's salvation. For the earthly Israel this means the restoration in the land and receiving the full blessing in the millennial realm of peace.

There is no longer directly talk of fulfillment in the short term, as is the case in the previous chapters. Isaiah 1-39 is about the threat of the king of Assyria with a short term fulfillment in the days of Hezekiah and a full fulfillment in the end time. In Isaiah 40-57 it is about the return from exile in Babylon with the short term fulfillment in the return of a remnant to the land and also a full fulfillment in the end time. But in this last part of the book, Isaiah 58-66, it is almost only about the fulfillment in the end time.

Isaiah 40-48 deals with the first great sin of the people of Israel, namely idolatry. That part ends with the observation that the wicked have no peace. In Isaiah 49-57 it is about the second great sin of the people of Israel, namely the rejection of Christ and receiving the antichrist with open arms. That part also ends with the statement that the wicked have no peace.

That is why Isaiah 58 begins with a call to humble themselves, just as the blowing of the trumpets is a call to humble themselves in view of the day of atonement (Lev 23:23-27). Also compare the call to humility and conversion by John the baptist, which is a preparation for the coming of Christ. The blowing of the trumpets goes hand in hand with fasting, which finds its climax on the day of atonement. Here, too, we find a call to fasting. The question sounds as it were: "Was it actually for Me that you fasted?" (Zec 7:5), for the LORD "desires truth in the innermost being" (Psa 51:6a).

### **Isa 58:1-5 | Fast of the People**

*1 "Cry loudly, do not hold back;  
Raise your voice like a trumpet,  
And declare to My people their transgression  
And to the house of Jacob their sins.  
2 "Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways,  
As a nation that has done righteousness  
And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God.  
They ask Me [for] just decisions,  
They delight in the nearness of God.  
3 'Why have we fasted and You do not see?  
[Why] have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?'  
Behold, on the day of your fast you find [your] desire,  
And drive hard all your workers.  
4 "Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist.  
You do not fast like [you do] today to make your voice heard on high.  
5 "Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself?  
Is it for bowing one's head like a reed  
And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed?  
Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD?*

In order to make the contrast with the future clear, the present situation must also be clear. That is what this chapter is about, which also has great significance for us. It is about fasting, but the intention is to demonstrate the principle of the underlying hypocritical, false piety, an external religion. This is also found in professing Christianity. We find it not only in the Pharisees, but also in ourselves. These are people who seem very sincere.

The prophet is summoned to cry “loudly” (literally “with the throat”) and raise his voice like a trumpet to make God’s people known their sins (verse 1). With this, Isaiah underlines the words of the prophet Micah, his contemporary (Mic 3:8b). The sound of the trumpet is not a silver trumpet, but a ram’s horn. The sound must penetrate to behind the hypocritical righteousness and religious masks behind which the people hide.

In verse 2 God speaks about the righteousness of His people. Outwardly everything seems to be in order. Prophetically this is about the last week – i.e. a period of seven years – from the book of Daniel (Dan 9:27). A covenant will be made between Israel under the antichrist and the restored Roman Empire or the united states of Europe under the leadership of the beast out of the sea (Rev 13:1-10). The temple in Jerusalem has been rebuilt and temple service resumed, something that Israel has not been able to do for many centuries (Hos 3:4).

It seems that they like to approach God. They seek the LORD daily. They are also interested in His ways. They would like to get to know them better and for that they read in the Bible. They even pretend they are a nation that has done righteousness and has not forsaken the ordinance of their God. You would say, applied to our time, that they are people who like to visit Christian meetings and are also religiously engaged at home. You would say that they serve God wholeheartedly.

However, verse 3a makes it clear that their hearts are not involved at all. Their own confession of piety becomes a cause for complaining that God does not pay attention to it. They complain that they notice so little of God’s blessing in their lives, to which they are entitled because of their tremendous dedication and interest in His things. He should reward this by giving them a pleasant life.

The fact is that they don't notice how much they do everything to please themselves and not God. With all their 'good' intentions they are blind to what *God* wants. There is something essential missing from all that external religion. The prayer and humility that go with fasting are absent as well as the real seeking of God. They cling to the form, but their hearts are not in harmony with it. The only fasting that Scripture asks for in the Old Testament is in connection with the day of atonement and is accompanied by true humility (Lev 16:29).

They are blamed by God for the kind of fasting they do, because their fasting is only an outward ritual (verse 3b). They seek their own advantage and put pressure on their staff to produce more (verse 4; cf. Jam 5:1-6). They content and strife with each other. How can the relationship with the Lord be in order when we live in contention with each other? This is not the fast preferred by the LORD and pleasing to Him (verse 5). Bowing the head, walking in sackcloth and living on ashes seems very humble, but God desires a contrite heart (Isa 57:15).

#### **Isa 58:6-7 | The Fast Which the LORD Chooses**

6 *"Is this not the fast which I choose,  
To loosen the bonds of wickedness,  
To undo the bands of the yoke,  
And to let the oppressed go free  
And break every yoke?*  
7 *"Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry  
And bring the homeless poor into the house;  
When you see the naked, to cover him;  
And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?*

The fast that is pleasing to Him will lead to loosen the bonds of wickedness and the release of the oppressed (verse 6). By presenting the fast that is pleasing to Him as questions to His people, the LORD asks if they agree with Him that His measure is the right one. Happy fast will work out that they care for the hungry, the poor and the naked and their families (verse 7).



These hungry, poor, and naked belong prophetically to the faithful remnant of Israel, referred to by the Lord Jesus as “the least of these brethren of Mine” (Mt 25:40,45). This shows that the restoration of the sacrifices and the temple service in Jerusalem after the rebuilding of the temple will only be external. They are a fig tree that has been putting forth leaves (Mt 24:32), but is still without fruit.

The seven forms of fasting mentioned by the LORD require a renunciation of one’s own interests and a sacrifice in the form of time, forces and means. In larger churches, some brothers and sisters, members of God’s family, may be spiritually hungry, poor and out in the cold, while the highest truths are proclaimed. They are not looked after. Sometimes they are not even missed if they do not come to the meeting. If they are not cared for outside the meetings, the meetings have no meaning for Him.

### Isa 58:8-12 | Promise of Blessing

8 *“Then your light will break out like the dawn,  
And your recovery will speedily spring forth;  
And your righteousness will go before you;  
The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.*  
9 *“Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
You will cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’  
If you remove the yoke from your midst,  
The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness,  
10 And if you give yourself to the hungry  
And satisfy the desire of the afflicted,  
Then your light will rise in darkness  
And your gloom [will become] like midday.*  
11 *“And the LORD will continually guide you,  
And satisfy your desire in scorched places,  
And give strength to your bones;  
And you will be like a watered garden,  
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.*  
12 *“Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins;  
You will raise up the age-old foundations;  
And you will be called the repairer of the breach,*

| *The restorer of the streets in which to dwell.*

If in these things they are in fellowship with the LORD, thinking about fasting as He does and thereby acting as He wants, their light will break through and their incurable wound will soon be healed (verse 8; cf. Isa 1:6). Righteousness and glory will protect them before and behind as the pillar of cloud was with them during the wilderness journey.

They will please God. Their prayer will be answered by Him. He will show Himself to them when they no longer subject others to rule over them and abuse them for the pursuit of their own desires (verse 9). They will then give to others what they desire for themselves, resulting in a life in the light (verse 10).

Merely external religion and external conformity to rituals are easy. In doing so, they create a spirit of complacency. However, what corresponds to God's approval is obedience to His Word. The first effect of this will be that they are kept in true exercise of heart in His presence. Subsequently, it leads to a fulfillment of His righteousness in their ways and relationships with others.

We can accurately fulfill spiritual duties, while all the time the heart is not upright toward God because there is sin in life that does not escape His all-seeing eye. That is the message of this section.

Verse 11 continues on what is said in verse 8, with promises of abundant blessing if the conditions are met. The promises are:

1. uninterrupted guidance;
2. satisfaction of the soul even in extreme drought and aridity;
3. the giving of strength to the bones, so that the body can be the instrument to fulfill His will;
4. the green beauty of a watered garden, as a picture of the brilliant manifestations of the working of the Spirit of God;
5. the outpouring of blessing by the Holy Spirit, presented as a source of water whose water does not disappoint.

What is promised here to Israel, the Lord in His grace wants to give in the life of the believer also now.

Verse 12 contains the promise of national restoration. Those who return from exile will rebuild the old ruins on foundations that many generations before have been laid. They will be given the beautiful names “the repairer of the breach” and “the restorer of the streets”.

### Isa 58:13-14 | Keeping the Sabbath

*13 “If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot  
From doing your [own] pleasure on My holy day,  
And call the sabbath a delight, the holy [day] of the LORD honorable,  
And honor it, desisting from your [own] ways,  
From seeking your [own] pleasure  
And speaking [your own] word,  
14 Then you will take delight in the LORD,  
And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;  
And I will feed you [with] the heritage of Jacob your father,  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”*

The promises of the previous verse, verse 12, are also subject to conditions (verse 13). Account must be taken of what the LORD has said. One’s own will may not be followed, one’s own pleasure may not be sought, worthless words may not be spoken. He who renounces all this shall rejoice in the LORD (verse 14). It is not merely a matter of keeping a commandment. The LORD Himself is inseparably connected to His law. The commandment is nothing but the expression of His own features and attributes.

Our rest, of which the sabbath speaks, is in the accomplished work of Christ. Awareness of this will keep us from pursuing our own interests. In this sense for us it is sabbath every day. We may experience every day as a “holy [day]” of the Lord, a day that is lived not for ourselves, but for Him (2Cor 5:15b). To live in this way is true peace for the believer. It is the life flowing from the peace that the Lord Jesus has acquired for us through His death and resurrection.

To “take delight in the LORD” is the highest possible occupation. It is the privilege of the believer, either in times of fellowship and worship, or in the activities of the service. It has become possible because the Lord Jesus

has become their Messiah. In connection with Him they can delight in the LORD. But it is only possible if the preceding conditions are met.

Then there are more promises, which are literal for Israel and spiritual for us. Riding “on the heights of the earth” speaks of the position of Israel among other nations (cf. Deu 32:13). Applied to us, we may think of our position in the heavenly places in Christ.

Feeding with “the heritage” speaks of taking possession of the entire inheritance promised to the fathers. For us, it means that we may think of enjoying the blessings we received in Christ in heaven. Both for Israel and for the church these blessings are certain, “for the mouth of the LORD has spoken”.

## Isaiah 59

### **Isa 59:1 | The LORD Can Save and Hear**

*1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short  
That it cannot save;  
Nor is His ear so dull  
That it cannot hear.*

This chapter continues with the topic of transgressions that prevent the promised blessing. It is not the LORD's fault. The Israelites think that their sacrifices and temple service do not change their situation at all. Perhaps they think that He cannot save from the power of the king of the North and that He is not able to hear.

However, the problem is not with Him, but with them. He is powerful to deliver them from their predicament of slavery of the nations. With His power He is at their disposal. If they call upon Him for help, He will listen to them. The believing remnant of Israel, "the wise" (Dan 12:3), the *maskilim*, will proclaim the message of this verse to the people.

### **Isa 59:2-8 | Separation Between the People and God**

*2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,  
And your sins have hidden [His] face from you so that He does not hear.  
3 For your hands are defiled with blood  
And your fingers with iniquity;  
Your lips have spoken falsehood,  
Your tongue mutters wickedness.  
4 No one sues righteously and no one pleads honestly.  
They trust in confusion and speak lies;  
They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity.  
5 They hatch adders' eggs and weave the spider's web;  
He who eats of their eggs dies,  
And [from] that which is crushed a snake breaks forth.  
6 Their webs will not become clothing,*

*Nor will they cover themselves with their works;  
Their works are works of iniquity,  
And an act of violence is in their hands.  
7 Their feet run to evil,  
And they hasten to shed innocent blood;  
Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity,  
Devastation and destruction are in their highways.  
8 They do not know the way of peace,  
And there is no justice in their tracks;  
They have made their paths crooked,  
Whoever treads on them does not know peace.*

Through their sins they have erected a barrier between themselves and God (verse 2). Here we find the spiritual state of the people of Israel during the great tribulation. If we pray and are not heard, we must also ask ourselves whether there is sin in our lives that prevent Him from hearing (cf. Jam 4:3). God and sin cannot go together. He cannot see the sins of His people, but hides His face from them, so that they must miss the joy of the light of His face.

Then the prophet as one of the *maskilim* will explain to them what is wrong. He points out their wickedness, their murderous actions, their lies and insincerity (verse 3). This takes place because they have rejected the LORD and will result in the murder of Christ. This evil will manifest itself again when the people under the leadership of their king, the antichrist, persecute the faithful believing Jews (Rev 13:7; cf. Psa 10:8-11).

They falsely accuse each other and the jurisprudence is crooked. They put their trust in worthless talk. What develops in them and presents itself as new life, turns out to be nothing but doom. They cannot be trusted and will surrender the true believers with lie and betrayal (Mic 7:1-6). Righteousness is lacking in their justice, everything is crooked (verse 4).

In verses 5-6 Isaiah draws the comparison with hatching eggs from poisonous snakes and weaving cobwebs. With this he indicates the harmful character of the devilish teachings which the antichrist will proclaim in the country. The eggs of the poisonous snake have a twofold result. Whoever

eats them dies, and if someone steps on an egg that has hatched a little further, a viper hatches. In both cases death is the result.

He also compares the actions of these instruments of satan with the weaving of a spider's web, which visually indicates the worthless and harmfulness of their activities (Job 8:14). It is not good for clothing, it does not give any warmth. That is how their actions are. Whoever is caught in their web dies a slow death.

The description of their activities in verses 7-8 is quoted by Paul in Romans 3 (Rom 3:15-17). He does this to describe the general guilt of man. He sketches the picture of the sinner and does so on the basis of this description given by the LORD of His people. This indicates that God's people have sunk so deeply, that they have sunk to the level of man without God, yes, to the level of man who wants to be like God (2Thes 2:4). Thus, the measure of mankind's sin is full. Isaiah represents the contrast that exists between their ways of destruction and corruption and the way of peace, both in connection with God and in connection with their fellow man. Those who follow the path of the man of sin know no peace.

### **Isa 59:9-15 | The Acknowledgment of the People**

9 *Therefore justice is far from us,  
And righteousness does not overtake us;  
We hope for light, but behold, darkness,  
For brightness, but we walk in gloom.*  
10 *We grope along the wall like blind men,  
We grope like those who have no eyes;  
We stumble at midday as in the twilight,  
Among those who are vigorous [we are] like dead men.*  
11 *All of us growl like bears,  
And moan sadly like doves;  
We hope for justice, but there is none,  
For salvation, [but] it is far from us.*  
12 *For our transgressions are multiplied before You,  
And our sins testify against us;  
For our transgressions are with us,  
And we know our iniquities:*

*13 Transgressing and denying the LORD,  
And turning away from our God,  
Speaking oppression and revolt,  
Conceiving [in] and uttering from the heart lying words.  
14 Justice is turned back,  
And righteousness stands far away;  
For truth has stumbled in the street,  
And uprightness cannot enter.  
15 Yes, truth is lacking;  
And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey.  
Now the LORD saw,  
And it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice.*

In verses 9-15a the prophet goes from speaking in the third person plural, “they” and “their”, to the first person plural, “we” and “our”. He includes himself with the people. First he stands opposite to the people and speaks to them. Now he stands among the people and speaks with and on behalf of them. The message of God comes to their heart just as later the message of John the baptist comes to the people. With and on behalf of the people, the prophet acknowledges the transgression and confirms the consequences of God’s judgment on them (verse 9).

The LORD does not act against His enemies for the benefit of His people (verse 19). That is why they are still in darkness. As exiles they hope for deliverance, but things seem to get worse. They grope around like blind people, though it is broad daylight, and stumble (verse 10). Without any view, they feel like dead.

Two thirds of the people were exterminated by of the king of the North and his allies (Zec 13:8-9). But now the people repent. It is not because of the powerlessness of the LORD that this has happened to them, but their iniquities are the cause of it. They finally understand this.

Those who persist in error will receive no help from the light of God’s truth, although it is available to them. Christ and the Scriptures have become a stumbling block for the Jews (Jn 5:39-40; 2Cor 3:14,16). It is no different in professing Christianity. The Scriptures are read but not understood. The blinding power of interpretive traditions obscures the light of God’s Word.



People who have the Bible remain in religious slavery. They are unable to enjoy the truth that would set them free if they listened faithfully to its voice instead of clinging to people's systems.

The first part of verse 11 describes two states. "Growl like bears" presupposes impatience; "moan sadly like doves" presupposes despair. Both are the opposite of the peace of the believer that comes from a contrite heart and submission to God's will. Because there is no surrender to the LORD, they miss that peace, and salvation remains far away.

After acknowledging their blind and dead state (verses 9-11), the people is now going to confess and name sins. These disasters all come on them because of their numerous transgressions (verse 12). They know this and acknowledge it now. They know that as a nation they have on the one hand denied the LORD by rejecting Christ, the Immanuel, and have fallen away from God by acknowledging the antichrist as king and god. On the other hand, they use "lying words" that originate from a depraved inner being and with which they persecute their fellowmen, the faithful remnant (verse 13).

"Justice" and "righteousness" are supplanted by injustice (verse 14). In the place where all people meet, "in the street", "truth" and "uprightness" are not upheld (cf. 1Cor 5:8). One tries to enrich oneself with as many lies and dishonest intentions as possible at the expense of the other. From those who do not participate, their possessions are even violently taken away (verse 15a).

From verse 15b up to and including verse 19 is the third part of this chapter. In it we see the attitude of the LORD toward their behavior and the way in which He intervenes. "One to intercede" (verse 16) can also be translated as 'someone who intervenes', a 'mediator'. He sees the evil mentioned in the preceding verses (verse 15b). The lack of justice is a great evil in His eyes. There is astonishment with Him because there is no man of character or someone who has the ability to turn the tide of evil for the grieving remnant.

### **Isa 59:16-19 | Indignation of the LORD**

| 16 And He saw that there was no man,

*And was astonished that there was no one to intercede;  
Then His own arm brought salvation to Him,  
And His righteousness upheld Him.  
17 He put on righteousness like a breastplate,  
And a helmet of salvation on His head;  
And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing  
And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.  
18 According to [their] deeds, so He will repay,  
Wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies;  
To the coastlands He will make recompense.  
19 So they will fear the name of the LORD from the west  
And His glory from the rising of the sun,  
For He will come like a rushing stream  
Which the wind of the LORD drives.*

There is no one who sides with God against the horrors and their inevitable consequences (verse 16). He sees evil, but He sees no one who cares and will do something about it. In the days of the golden calf there is a man like Moses who intervenes for the people, but there is no one here (cf. Rev 5:4).

Up to now, no help is possible. Not from below, nor from above. But now that the people have come to repentance and cry for mercy, now that they have come to confession with a truly broken heart, now help can come from above, now the LORD Himself comes, moved with compassion.

If then no one would stand up for the people – and there is no one who could! (Psa 49:7-8) –, He will do it Himself. He Himself will be the Redeemer of His people (verse 20). No one has to help Him. His own arm, picture of His power to do something, offers Him help. His actions happen on the basis of His righteousness. He rests on that.

In the subsequent description of how He clothes Himself (verse 17), we have pictures of the various revelations of His features and power, the acts of His righteousness and His grace. In the clothing, the inner becomes public. “Righteousness” is His “breastplate”, “salvation” is His “helmet”, “vengeance” is His “garment” and “zeal” is His “mantle”.

It is imagery. The LORD adorns Himself with these four attributes. It recalls the armor of the believer in the letter to the Ephesians, where the garments consist of the spiritual weapons available to us to resist the enemy (Eph 6:13-17). There is this difference, however, that the LORD needs no defense. He uses these weapons to avenge Himself on His enemies.

As an explanation of the clothing of the LORD follows a prophecy that unfolds in order the great future events in connection with Israel. First, the LORD will deal with the rebellious in Israel and mete out punishment on those in the nation who persistently ally themselves with the antichrist. They are the opponents referred to in the first part of verse 18. He will repay them according to their deeds. Secondly, the judgments will fall on "His enemies" in the world of the nations and "the coastlands", all of whom will gather against the LORD and against His Anointed (Psa 2:2).

Through the performance of the LORD, fear of Him will arise among those who fear the wrath of God, followed by forced submission to and acknowledgment of the rights of God and His Son (verse 19). These enemies are the peoples who go to war against Israel under the leadership of the Assyrian, the king of the North. They will come "like a rushing stream".

### **Isa 59:20 | The Redeemer for Zion**

20 *"A Redeemer will come to Zion,  
And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the LORD.*

The judgments that mean the downfall for the enemies mean salvation for the remnant. For them He comes as Redeemer. This remnant consists of the penitents in Israel, they are the ones who were converted from transgression in Jacob. They have converted in the awareness that they are guilty of the rejection of the Messiah.

### **Isa 59:21 | Spirit and Word**

21 *"As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD:  
"My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have  
put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from  
the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your off-  
spring's offspring," says the LORD, "from now and forever."*

The chapter concludes with the promise of a new covenant. It is based on God's word to Abraham (Gen 17:4). The remnant receives the promise that God's Spirit will come upon them. Here we have again that wonderful combination of Spirit and Word. They are often mentioned together and will be the power of the people in the end time (cf. Hag 2:5).

A testimony of the LORD will be given continually. Generation upon generation will continue during the realm of peace. It concerns those who enter the realm of peace and all the next generations who will be born. They themselves will not stop declaring His Word and giving testimony of Him. This means that during the realm of peace, the people of Israel will consist only of those who are truly born of God. What a mighty promise. What a rich blessing!

It is to be hoped that this is already the case for us. If God's Spirit dwells in us and God's Word dwells richly in us, we will pass on the testimony of the Lord Jesus as our life to our children and grandchildren. It is one of the greatest blessings a believer on earth may know if it is true for himself that life is Christ for him and he sees that this is true for his children and grandchildren as well (2Jn 1:4; 3Jn 1:4).

## Isaiah 60

### **Isa 60:1-3 | Light breaks through**

*1 "Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.  
2 "For behold, darkness will cover the earth  
And deep darkness the peoples;  
But the LORD will rise upon you  
And His glory will appear upon you.  
3 "Nations will come to your light,  
And kings to the brightness of your rising.*

Isaiah 60-62 summarize the message of Isaiah 58-66. They show us the end result of Israel as the people that the LORD will restore and save in order to show the salvation of God in this world. We clearly see that this salvation is not the result of the work of Israel itself, but of what the LORD works.

As a result of what has just preceded this (Isaiah 58-59), suddenly an encouraging message comes to Zion. For a long time it has remained in darkness and desolation, but the glory of the realm of peace is coming. The new day is coming and "the sun of righteousness" will shine (Mal 4:2). This is also true in the sinner's life when the light shines in his heart when he hears and obeys the call of the gospel (2Cor 4:4,6).

The light comes to God's people in the Person of the Messiah (Isa 9:2; 49:6; Jn 1:9). The command "arise" is a word that contains the power to obey (verse 1; cf. Mk 3:5b) and contrasts with their situation as described in the previous chapter (Isa 59:10). Zion must arise from the dust, in which it has lain for so long as in a death sleep, to shine, for her Light, the Giver of light, comes, through which the glory of the LORD rises upon her (cf. Isa 2:5). It speaks of the restoration of Israel to finally be God's beacon of light, a lighthouse for the nations.

Verse 2 reveals the condition of the nations in their thick darkness that will be there especially when the antichrist reigns. Normally there is little knowledge of God among the nations. Only the eternal power of God in

creation is known to them (Rom 1:20). But even that will disappear completely in the years under the reign of the antichrist. Through this man, the antichrist, there will be an unprecedented eclipse about God. This man declares himself to be God (2Thes 2:4; Gen 3:5; Acts 12:21-23). That darkness will remain until the LORD will rise upon His people and His glory will be seen upon them. Then the nations will come to that light (verse 3).

Until the Lord comes to take His church to Himself, the light of the gospel shines in the individual hearts, while the nations are still in darkness. This gospel will not bring all nations to receive the light. Only when Israel is restored the nations will receive the light of God's testimony and acknowledge the truth about the living God and His Christ. In Psalm 67 we find the prayer of the faithful remnant of Israel: "God be gracious to us and bless us, [and] cause His face to shine upon us— Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God" (Psa 67:1b-3a).

#### **Isa 60:4-7 | Brought to Israel**

4 *"Lift up your eyes round about and see;  
They all gather together, they come to you.  
Your sons will come from afar,  
And your daughters will be carried in the arms.*

5 *"Then you will see and be radiant,  
And your heart will thrill and rejoice;  
Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you,  
The wealth of the nations will come to you.*

6 *"A multitude of camels will cover you,  
The young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
All those from Sheba will come;  
They will bring gold and frankincense,  
And will bear good news of the praises of the LORD.*

7 *"All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you,  
The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you;  
They will go up with acceptance on My altar,  
And I shall glorify My glorious house.*

The nations will not only go up to Jerusalem as the center, but they will also bring back God's people there from all the countries to which they are scattered (verse 4; Isa 49:22-23). Here it is about the lost ten tribes. These heathen will handle them with care. What the people of Israel will then experience will give them great, moving joy (verse 5). "Thrill and rejoice" is literally "tremble and open wide". The enormous change in their situation will not only give them immense joy, but also a widening of their hearts to understand the infinite goodness of God.

The national revival of Israel has been promised before (Isa 26:19). We see this also in the vision of the valley with the dry bones (Eze 37:1-14,21-22). There we see that not only the two tribes realm, but also the ten tribes realm will be restored.

The nations will make an effort to provide God's people with all the riches (verses 5-6). "A multitude of camels", a symbol of a thriving economy, will be used to bring all that is valuable to Israel. They come "from Sheba", the land from which a queen once came to visit Solomon, also with "camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones" (1Kgs 10:1-2). Just as when Israel carried with them the riches of Egypt at their redemption (Exo 12:35-36), in the future the ten tribes will return laden with the wealth of the nations (verse 5).

The peoples living in the immediate vicinity of Israel will be the first to come to faith. The names mentioned here: Midian, Ephah, Sheba, Kedar and Nebaioth, speak of the Arab countries that are still islamic countries today, but will also come to faith in Christ in the future. They will bring gold, frankincense and flocks in abundance to Israel.

"Gold and frankincense" are also brought as tribute by wise men from the East as representatives of the nations to the Child Jesus when He is born (Mt 2:11). Matthew also mentions myrrh, which is missing here. Myrrh is in place there, because it speaks of the suffering that the born King of the Jews will have to endure at His first coming. But there is no more suffering here, because at His second coming He reigns in glory. Gold speaks of His Divine glory, He is Immanuel (Mt 1:23), God with us. Frankincense speaks of His glory as Man, He is the Man Jesus, Who saves His people from their sins (Mt 1:21).

Yet also in the realm of peace there will always be the remembrance of the work that Christ accomplished on the cross. This is what the great crowd of “flocks” and “rams” speaks of that are given to the people of God to bring an abundance of sacrifices on the altar of the new temple (verse 7). The fragrance of these sacrifices will surround and fill this house and shall “glorify” the “glorious house” of the LORD. These sacrifices will go up “with acceptance” on God’s altar and God shall give His house the greatest splendor and glory.

### **Isa 60:8-16 | Nations and Kings Serve Israel**

8 *“Who are these who fly like a cloud  
And like the doves to their lattices?*  
9 *“Surely the coastlands will wait for Me;  
And the ships of Tarshish [will come] first,  
To bring your sons from afar,  
Their silver and their gold with them,  
For the name of the LORD your God,  
And for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you.*  
10 *“Foreigners will build up your walls,  
And their kings will minister to you;  
For in My wrath I struck you,  
And in My favor I have had compassion on you.*  
11 *“Your gates will be open continually;  
They will not be closed day or night,  
So that [men] may bring to you the wealth of the nations,  
With their kings led in procession.*  
12 *“For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish,  
And the nations will be utterly ruined.*  
13 *“The glory of Lebanon will come to you,  
The juniper, the box tree and the cypress together,  
To beautify the place of My sanctuary;  
And I shall make the place of My feet glorious.*  
14 *“The sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you,  
And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet;  
And they will call you the city of the LORD,*



*The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*

*15 "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated*

*With no one passing through,*

*I will make you an everlasting pride,*

*A joy from generation to generation.*

*16 "You will also suck the milk of nations*

*And suck the breast of kings;*

*Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior*

*And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.*

The question in verse 8 might well be realized in the large numbers of passengers arriving in the land with planes in our time. This makes it possible for large numbers of Jews to return to their land in a brief period of time. Yet in our days they are only a foretaste of the great return to the land that will take place after the Lord Jesus has come to earth, defeated the enemies and established His kingdom.

They will also come by ship from far away countries (verse 9). The LORD will signal those lands to let His people go. This will not be by political decisions, but in a conscious act for the honor of the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. They will provide them with gold and silver. At the same time, the nations will personally help to rebuild the walls of the city (verse 10; cf. Zec 6:15). The help of King Hiram of Tyre in the construction of the temple is a foreshadowing of the help the nations will give in the future in the building of the state of Israel (2Chr 2:3-16).

Everything serves as a proof that the time of anger and discipline is over and that the LORD takes care of them now with pleasure. Therefore, the gates will be constantly open (verse 11), indicating that there is no more evil to fear and that peace has come. The nations will be free to enter in order to pay homage to this people who were so tormented and oppressed at the time (cf. Rev 21:25-26).

Verse 12 shows that God's judgment during the realm of peace will come on nations that reveal a rebellious spirit and refuse to support Israel (Zec 14:17-19). However, nations that do support Israel will be blessed. A principle that we also see when God blesses Potiphar because of Joseph (Gen

39:5). This proves that it is not yet about the eternal state, but about a state on earth where the Lord Jesus rules and where He directly punishes evil.

In verse 13 in an intermediate sentence the joy of the LORD is mentioned that He has in the prospect of the glory of His sanctuary, the beautiful temple of the realm of peace. He calls it the “place of My feet”, which is the ark in the temple (1Chr 28:2; Psa 99:5; 132:7), indicating that He will dwell there (Exo 25:21-22). It is the place of His rest. The trees of Lebanon, here called “the glory of Lebanon”, will increase the splendor of the temple. Possibly we should think of planting them in the vicinity of the temple, or decorating avenues that lead to the temple.

Then the LORD in verse 14 goes on to talk about the nations from whom they suffered so much in the great tribulation. Now their sons will come and bow down before them. Their fathers will be wiped out by the judgments in the day of the LORD. Also “all those who despised you” will bow down before them. These are the people who did not gather in a direct way against the LORD and His Anointed, but despised God’s people in the time of enmity. These groups will call Jerusalem “the city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel”. What a difference compared to the old days when people looked down on them!

Instead of being abandoned and hated like an unloved woman (cf. Deu 21:15), the LORD will make the city “an everlasting pride, a joy from generation to generation” (verse 15). Joy will pass through the generations. The nations and their kings will make their life force available to this people, just as a mother gives milk to her child (verse 16). Above all, they will no longer be blind, but will know that the LORD is their Savior and the Mighty One of Jacob their Redeemer.

### **Isa 60:17-20 | The Glory of the City**

*17 “Instead of bronze I will bring gold,  
And instead of iron I will bring silver,  
And instead of wood, bronze,  
And instead of stones, iron.  
And I will make peace your administrators  
And righteousness your overseers.*

18 *"Violence will not be heard again in your land,  
 Nor devastation or destruction within your borders;  
 But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise.*  
 19 *"No longer will you have the sun for light by day,  
 Nor for brightness will the moon give you light;  
 But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light,  
 And your God for your glory.*  
 20 *"Your sun will no longer set,  
 Nor will your moon wane;  
 For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light,  
 And the days of your mourning will be over.*

Then Israel will be the richest land in the world. The city will be rebuilt with imperishable metals, on which weather and wind will have no influence (verse 17). It is glorious and strong. Life in the city is determined by peace and righteousness. It will be pleasant to live there. Violence and destruction are absent (verse 18). The walls of the city are called "salvation" because the city is impregnable and its inhabitants are perfectly safe. The gates of the city are called "praise" because God will continually glorify His Name there.

Sun and moon will still exist, but will no longer be necessary because of the great radiance that the presence of the LORD in the *Shechina*, the cloud of the glory in which He dwells, will cause and in which the church is also involved (verses 19-20; cf. Rev 22:5; Mt 17:2; Acts 26:13). This will truly be the victory of light over darkness. In such a state there is no longer room for such things as mourning and sadness. They will flee away to make room for everlasting joy (Isa 35:10). Joy is always experienced more intensely after a period of sorrow and trial.

### **Isa 60:21-22 | Everything Is the Work of the LORD**

21 *"Then all your people [will be] righteous;  
 They will possess the land forever,  
 The branch of My planting,  
 The work of My hands,  
 That I may be glorified.*  
 22 *"The smallest one will become a clan,*

*And the least one a mighty nation.  
I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time."*

In the realm of peace, the whole people of God on earth are only "righteous" ones (verse 21). The ungodly mass has perished because of the judgments of God. What is left of God's people are only those who, repenting of their sins, accepted the Messiah. This Israel of God will possess the land permanently.

In the past, Israel never possessed the entire inheritance, not even at the time of Solomon. But now the time has come for God's promise to Israel to be fulfilled. They are the "branch" planted by the LORD. It is the word that is also used for Christ (Isa 11:1) and therefore indicates the unity of life between the people and their Messiah. They will radiate His glory to His glorification.

The people will bear exuberant fruit and grow into a mighty nation (verse 22). "The smallest one" may mean a person with few or no children. "The least one" may mean the insignificant. The increase in population will also mean an increase in joyful fellowship. When the time comes, all this will happen at great speed. And it will certainly happen, for He, "the LORD", will do it.

## Isaiah 61

### **Isa 61:1-3 | The Good News**

*1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
Because the LORD has anointed me  
To bring good news to the afflicted;  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to captives  
And freedom to prisoners;  
2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,  
3 To grant those who mourn [in] Zion,  
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,  
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.  
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,  
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.*

Just as Isaiah 50 and Isaiah 53 showed us Christ and His suffering, this chapter reveals Him to us in the full grace of His Person regarding the blessing for Israel. Until the end of the previous chapter the LORD is the Speaker. Now comes a change of glory. We see that change in verse 1 of this chapter in the change of the Speaker Who now speaks. It is no longer the LORD here, but it is Christ Who speaks here. This is apparent from what the Lord Jesus says in the synagogue in Nazareth, where He indicates that this Scripture of Isaiah which He has just read out is fulfilled in Him (Lk 4:17-21).

In this verse we find the triune God. The name “Lord GOD” is the translation of *Adonai Yahweh*. This Name appears four times in Isaiah 50 (Isa 50:4-9). The anointing takes place at the baptism of the Lord Jesus when the Holy Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove (Lk 3:21-22). The anointing is also mentioned at the announcement of the Servant of the

LORD: "I have put My Spirit upon Him" (Isa 42:1). His anointing means His special equipment for His service as King, Priest and Prophet.

In this section of Isaiah we learn that Christ's service is threefold:

1. a service of grace (verses 1-2a),
2. a service to judge (verse 2b) and
3. a service to restore (verse 2c).

It is remarkable that in Nazareth the Lord Jesus only reads the first part about grace and then declares: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:18-21).

"Afflicted" has to do with humility, but here mainly as a result of "suffering". The afflicted is someone who is shaped by suffering and has become small and dependent. An afflicted is broken and shattered by suffering, but also internally broken by the awareness of sin. Because of this he has humbled himself and is brokenhearted.

To "bind up the brokenhearted" is to bring enlightenment to those who are wounded in the heart (Psa 147:3). The Gospel according to Luke recounts these tender acts of the Lord (Lk 4:40; 7:13-15; 13:11-13; 17:11-19). It is the same with "proclaim liberty to captives". It is about those who are bound with chains of sin and the devil. Many are bound and blinded by the religion of the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees.

The Lord Jesus was sent "to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD" (verse 2). The "year" does not stand for a certain period of time, but for a longer period of time. That period lasts as long as Christ preaches the gospel to Israel. Ultimately it means the year in which everything that God has promised to Israel will be given back to them (Lev 25:10,13; 27:24). That will be the true year of jubilation with exuberant joy about this favor.

The second service of Christ is to announce 'the day of vengeance'. "The favorable year" is opposite to "the day of vengeance". In His mercy, God will limit the exercise of His vengeance to a brief period of time. In the quote the Lord Jesus makes in the synagogue of this section, He ends with "the favorable year". He does not speak about the day of vengeance. He did not come at His first coming on earth to announce the day of vengeance. Later He says that days of vengeance will come upon the people

and that Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Lk 21:22-24).

Here in Isaiah it is about judging the enemies of Israel, especially the king of the North. This judgment is also one of the services that the Lord will perform. It is necessary to establish His kingdom in peace. The world will learn righteousness, not by grace, but by judgment (Isa 26:9b).

Verse 3 is about the third part of Christ's service: comfort and restoration. This will be fulfilled after the time of "Jacob's distress" (Jer 30:7), when the God-fearing remnant will have gone through a time of unprecedented sadness. Then there will be garland instead of ashes. In Hebrew, the words "garland" and "ashes" consist of the same letters, but in a different order: *pe'er* and *epr*. That means that the LORD does not give joy instead of mourning, but even more, that He turns their mourning into joy. That which is the cause of their mourning today, will be the cause of their gladness!

The LORD, Who will come as their Redeemer at His second coming, will bring them comfort with joy, giving them a mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. All signs of mourning will be taken away, and instead signs of gladness will come. Like a mantle on a body, the praise of the redeemed will be the expression of the inner jubilation. As oil and wine to their healing (cf. Lk 10:34), the Lord will pronounce the "blessed" of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) to the faithful remnant. They will know forgiveness of their sins (Zec 13:1).

There wouldn't be such joy if there hadn't been such mourning first. Never does the sun shine brighter than after a dark cloud. There will also be worked a spiritual change by the LORD. They will be called "oaks of righteousness". "Oaks" presuppose strength and greenness. Thus it is with "righteousness" that will characterize the people. They will not work this themselves, but it will be "the planting of the LORD" for His glorification (cf. Isa 60:21). The people are seen as a forest of large, powerful trees that cannot be felled by a storm or an axe.

### **Isa 61:4-9 | Restoration of Israel**

| 4 *Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,*

*They will raise up the former devastations;  
And they will repair the ruined cities,  
The desolations of many generations.  
5 Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks,  
And foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.  
6 But you will be called the priests of the LORD;  
You will be spoken of [as] ministers of our God.  
You will eat the wealth of nations,  
And in their riches you will boast.  
7 Instead of your shame [you will have a] double [portion],  
And [instead of] humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion.  
Therefore they will possess a double [portion] in their land,  
Everlasting joy will be theirs.  
8 For I, the LORD, love justice,  
I hate robbery in the burnt offering;  
And I will faithfully give them their recompense  
And make an everlasting covenant with them.  
9 Then their offspring will be known among the nations,  
And their descendants in the midst of the peoples.  
All who see them will recognize them  
Because they are the offspring [whom] the LORD has blessed.*

These verses predict the future restoration of Israel and its exaltation to a place of dignity, honor and authority over the nations. Places that are deserted and desolate will be fertile and densely populated (verse 4). Already now the remains of cities are being excavated, but then they will be completely rebuilt. Those who have oppressed them will serve them and work as shepherds of their flocks and farmers (verse 5). They will gladly do so because they want to share in the blessing of this people (cf. Isa 14:1-2). That blessing comes from God. The people will see by the blessing that God is with His people (Isa 60:10; Zec 6:15).

It is to be hoped that people will be equally attracted by our revelation of the blessing God has given us. Every revelation in the realm of peace has for us its counterpart in the spiritual realization of what our spiritual blessings are. It is also meant to show that *God* is with us, that the attention is focused on Him. That will attract people to belong to that God.



Israel itself will be what God purposed from the beginning for His people, that they should be a priestly people, a kingdom of priests (verse 6; Exo 19:6a). Just as the descendants of Aaron performed priestly service for all the people of Israel, so in the future all the people of Israel will perform priestly service for the nations. We are already in that position, but it is God's desire that we also practice it.

All the nations that have always used their wealth for self-enrichment will bring this wealth to Israel. Israel will enjoy it. Just as the priests used to live from all that the people of Israel brought them, tithes and sacrifices, so Israel as a whole will live from all that the nations will bring them. Everything that the Gentiles have boasted of and appropriated from the earth will pass to Israel under the blessing and powerful ministry of Christ.

This subject is described by Paul in Romans 11 (Rom 11:13-32). If the fall and current loss of Israel means the riches of the nations through the gospel of grace, much greater will be the result of their fullness, that is, Israel's full national prosperity and welfare. As a servant of God, the people of Israel will perform as it were Levite service for the nations (Isa 2:3), so that the nations will receive education regarding the ways and thoughts of the LORD.

They will gain a double possession in the land that will extend far beyond the original boundaries (verse 7). It will go with them, just as it went with Job who received double after a time of calamity (Job 42:10-12). Whereas before they have been in confusion, objects of reproach and contempt, they will now be filled with an exceptional and infinite joy. There will be double compensation for all their past suffering, just as they have received double for all their sins (Isa 40:2).

In verse 8 the LORD makes it clear that in all blessings God's own features will be maintained. He declares that He loves justice and that He hates wrongful robbery. By this He refers to the cruel treatment Israel has received from their opponents. In direct contrast to this He "will faithfully give them their recompense". He will make sure that their work will be pleasing to Him and will be done in faithfulness. For the faithfulness with which they have served the LORD, they will be rewarded by Him (Mt 10:40-42).

He will make an everlasting covenant with them with the result that the nations will recognize them as a people blessed by the LORD (verse 9). Their offspring will be glorious among all nations – a complete change from the present situation.

### **Isa 61:10-11 | Rejoicing Greatly in the LORD**

*10 I will rejoice greatly in the LORD,  
My soul will exult in my God;  
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,  
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,  
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
11 For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,  
And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up,  
So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
To spring up before all the nations.*

The Speaker in these verses is Christ Himself, though in identification with the remnant. On their behalf He declares His joy in the LORD (verse 10). In that day, the joy of Christ corresponds perfectly to the joy of the believing remnant. He sees what will be realized in the coming day as already fulfilled.

The garments of salvation with which the God-fearing in Israel are clothed are His own garments. Just “as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland [or: the priestly turban], and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels”, so will the LORD reveal Himself in His glory and beauty in connection with His redeemed people. He decks himself with the garland, or turban, like a priest does. This speaks of the fact that the remnant is made suitable to appear before God as a priest.

Christ will then appear as the true Melchizedek and act in the triple capacity of King, Priest and Bridegroom. In view of the church He will also act as royal Priest (Heb 7:17; 9:11) and as her heavenly Bridegroom (Eph 5:25-32).

Just as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and just as the garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, so will “the Lord GOD” cause “righteousness” and “praise” (or fame) to spring up before all nations. God causes

the germination of the seed. The bearer of the seed is the Servant of the LORD.

All these processes are now active among all nations through the gospel, but the direct application here is to the condition of Israel in the millennial realm of peace. Then the prayer of Moses will be answered: "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us" (Psa 90:17a). Then Israel will show the glory of the LORD to the nations, namely 'righteousness' and 'praise'.

## Isaiah 62

### **Isa 62:1-2 | A New Name**

*1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet,  
Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness,  
And her salvation like a torch that is burning.  
2 The nations will see your righteousness,  
And all kings your glory;  
And you will be called by a new name  
Which the mouth of the LORD will designate.*

Verses 1-6 connect directly to the previous chapter. The prophet, as type of Messiah and the faithful remnant, will not keep silent and not keep quiet for Zion's sake until "her righteousness" and "her salvation" respectively "goes forth like brightness" and "like a torch that is burning" (verse 1). He cannot keep quiet as long as Zion is still oppressed. But when her righteousness and her salvation have come, a totally new situation for the people will have arisen, which has also been discussed in the previous chapter.

Zion or Jerusalem is the place God has chosen to make His Name dwell. Therefore, Christ will not keep quiet (cf. Rth 3:18) until Zion has become a capital for the nations, both religious and political (Psa 48:1b-2). Therefore, Christ will not keep silent, He will speak to God and intercede for the people, until He has brought the matter to an end, until all God's promises, which are also in Him as far as Zion is concerned, are fulfilled (2Cor 1:20).

The nations will see Israel with a new name given to them by the LORD (verse 2). Now it is still so, that because of them the Name of God is blasphemed among the nations (Rom 2:24). That will change when Israel is God's people again and has a new name. That new name of Israel reads: "the LORD is our righteousness" (Jer 33:16). That is how the nations will call Israel, while they will be amazed at the righteousness and splendor of

this once destitute people. Kings who conquered the land and left behind devastation will admire the regained glory of that land.

However, “the LORD our righteousness” is also the Name of God Himself in the realm of peace (Jer 23:6). The LORD and Israel have the same name! That is because Jerusalem will soon be united with Him as the earthly bride of Christ. Then Israel, as God’s redeemed people, may also bear His Name.

### Isa 62:3 | What Zion Means to the LORD

*3 You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,  
And a royal diadem in the hand of your God.*

The imagery describing of the condition of Zion in this verse is exceptionally beautiful. The city is “a crown of beauty” and “a royal diadem”. The “crown” is worn by a king. The “diadem” or “turban” is what the high priest wears (Exo 28:4,39; Zec 3:5). Crown and diadem are not seen here on the head, but the crown is “in the hand of the LORD” and the diadem is “in the hand of your God”. The second line of the verse says the same as the first line, but in other words. This strengthens the thought. The name “LORD” emphasizes that He is in a covenant relationship with His people. The fact that He is also called “your God” emphasizes that He is the only and omnipotent God of His people.

The crown and diadem are crown jewels in His hand. By this Scripture means that in His hand the people of Israel will show the characteristics of king (crown) and priest (diadem), just like the Lord Jesus Himself, Who as the true Melchizedek will be both King and Priest.

Two different Hebrew words for “hand” are used. The first word is the open hand, which indicates power, and the second word is the palm of the hand, which indicates that the hand shows something. Together they represent the intense joy of the heart of the LORD in revealing His grace and redeeming power. In this we may see the functions of royal authority and priesthood both united in Christ. Israel will share this dual capacity with Christ.

Many have tried, and the antichrist will try it as the last one (Rev 13:11), to exercise authority over both civil and religious life. But as has been already

shown throughout the history of mankind, the last attempt of the anti-christ will also fail (Eze 21:26). It is only in Christ that these two functions are perfectly connected and will be exercised by Him in a perfect way (Zec 6:13).

### **Isa 62:4-5 | Zion Accepted Again**

*4 It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken,"  
Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate";  
But you will be called, "My delight is in her,"  
And your land, "Married";  
For the LORD delights in you,  
And [to Him] your land will be married.  
5 For [as] a young man marries a virgin,  
[So] your sons will marry you;  
And [as] the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
[So] your God will rejoice over you.*

In the coming day Jerusalem will no longer be called "Forsaken" and the land will no longer be called "Desolate" (verse 4). The city will receive names that express the love of the heart of the LORD for her. She is called: "My delight is in her", which is the translation of Hephzibah, the name of the wife of Hezekiah, the mother of Manasseh (2Kgs 21:1) and contemporary of Isaiah.

He also calls her "Married". He has not been able to acknowledge her as such for some time because of her unfaithfulness (cf. Hos 1:9). When she has been converted, He will openly acknowledge again the marriage bond He has never broken (cf. Hos 2:19-20).

His love will be as strong and full as the love of a newlywed (verse 5). The thought in every part of this verse is that of the bridegroom acquiring an inalienable right 'to have and to keep'.

### **Isa 62:6-7 | Persistent Intercessory Prayer**

*6 On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen;  
All day and all night they will never keep silent.  
You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves;*

*7 And give Him no rest until He establishes  
And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

In view of all this, the LORD has appointed watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem who intercede day and night with the LORD for the city. They call to Him in view of the sad state of Jerusalem until His purposes concerning His earthly people are fulfilled (verses 6-7). By appointing watchmen the LORD says as it were that He Himself has arranged the intercession. The watchmen symbolize those who pray for the peace of Jerusalem. With this they show once again that they are united with the LORD, united with Him in the search for the restoration of Israel (cf. verse 1).

That special intercession should be our ongoing activity in view of our situation as believers who also live in an end time amidst the ruins of the Christian testimony (1Pet 4:7). Just as they do not give Him rest, we should not do so, but continually appeal to Him in prayers for His people (cf. Lk 11:5-10; 18:1-8).

### **Isa 62:8-9 | Jerusalem Will Never Be Abandoned Again**

*8 The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm,  
"I will never again give your grain [as] food for your enemies;  
Nor will foreigners drink your new wine for which you have labored."  
9 But those who garner it will eat it and praise the LORD;  
And those who gather it will drink it in the courts of My sanctuary.*

These verses give the answer to the prayers. The answer is definite, but He wants to use the intercession of His own for the fulfillment of His purpose. The Lord wants to be prayed to. Knowing the will of God does not make us passive, but rather brings us to the prayer that this will also will be carried out. God encourages believers through His Spirit to pray for things of Him that He has decided to give. This is praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:20).

Here the LORD declares with an oath that the heathen powers will never again plunder the land (Isa 10:13-14) and rob the rightful owners of the results of their toil (verse 8). They will enjoy the harvest and praise the LORD for it (verse 9).

This reminds us in a powerful way that we will make a habit of thanking the Lord daily for everything He gives us in material prosperity in

the form of food. Our thanksgiving before meals should never become a formality. It must come from a heart that is always aware of the goodness of God. The food we eat is “sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer” (1Tim 4:4-5).

Furthermore, those who have collected the wine in the coming day will “drink it in the courts of My sanctuary”. They will joyfully go to the house of the LORD with hearts filled with thankfulness.

### **Isa 62:10 | Call to Go Out of Babylon**

*10 Go through, go through the gates,  
Clear the way for the people;  
Build up, build up the highway,  
Remove the stones, lift up a standard over the peoples.*

The continual ascent to the house of the LORD of the previous verse gets in this verse a vivid forecast in an order that is yet to be issued. To come into the house of God and see the Messiah His people will go through the gates of Jerusalem. The way there must be prepared, that is to say, cleared of obstacles (cf. Isa 40:3; 57:14). There will be a highway, a royal way, over which one will go to Israel. This also has a spiritual application, because any obstacle to a spiritual blessing will also be removed from the heart of Israel.

Under the standard of the Messiah, which means under His protection, they will travel through the lands of the peoples. Thus we have departed from spiritual Babylon under the standard of the gospel on our way to heavenly Jerusalem, while going through the world where deceptive stumbling blocks need to be removed that want to hinder our progress.

Anything that is a stumbling block, anything that impedes the enjoyment of free and continuous access to the throne of grace, anything that stands in the way of our fellowship with God, must be removed. Often there is a lot of clutter that needs to be cleared away, such as worldly connections and carnal desires.

### **Isa 62:11-12 | The LORD Comes As Savior**

| *11 Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth,*



*Say to the daughter of Zion, "Lo, your salvation comes;  
Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him."  
12 And they will call them, "The holy people,  
The redeemed of the LORD";  
And you will be called, "Sought out, a city not forsaken."*

These verses describe the fulfillment of the promises for Israel. The voice of the LORD will sound throughout the earth to announce that salvation for Zion has come (verse 11). Salvation here is a Person. He is coming! 'Salvation' is in Hebrew *yasha*, a word that comes back in the name Jesus. Jesus means 'the LORD is salvation'. When He comes, He also comes with a reward for those who have been faithful to Him (Rev 22:12).

The nations will recognize Israel as "the holy people, the redeemed of the LORD" (verse 12). The city that was not sought by anyone, but despised, will be called "Sought out, a city not forsaken". Many will go to that city to see her glory and beauty. They will see the wonders of God's grace and power revealed in her. The city will be full of people and the streets will be filled with happy playing boys and girls (Zec 8:4-5).

## Isaiah 63

### **Isa 63:1-6 | The LORD Judges the Nations**

*1 Who is this who comes from Edom,  
With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah,  
This One who is majestic in His apparel,  
Marching in the greatness of His strength?  
“It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”*

*2 Why is Your apparel red,  
And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?*

*3 “I have trodden the wine trough alone,  
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.  
I also trod them in My anger  
And trampled them in My wrath;  
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,  
And I stained all My raiment.*

*4 “For the day of vengeance was in My heart,  
And My year of redemption has come.*

*5 “I looked, and there was no one to help,  
And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold;  
So My own arm brought salvation to Me,  
And My wrath upheld Me.*

*6 “I trod down the peoples in My anger  
And made them drunk in My wrath,  
And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”*

These verses contain a dialogue between the redeemed remnant of Israel, delivered from their great tribulation, and the LORD. It is the time of Christ's personal intervention to defeat the nations who have gathered under the antichrist in Israel. That is why this section rightly follows the Divine promises of the previous chapter.

The Jewish people, freed from their enemies, ask with amazement at His power and glory, the question Who the great Deliverer is (verse 1). He is the Conqueror, Who comes at the head of His armies (Rev 19:13-14). But

why does He come from Edom and Bozrah? We find the answer to this question by comparing Psalm 29:1-8 with Daniel 11:45 (Psa 29:1-8; Dan 11:45). Daniel 11:45 refers to the military base of the king of the North, after he returned from conquering Egypt. He was stationed there to defeat the gathered armies of the restored Roman Empire, that is Western Europe. The nations are then gathered to wage war in the valley of Har-Magedon (Rev 16:16).

Psalm 29 describes prophetically the defeat of all those nations by the power of the voice of the LORD. The defeat begins in Lebanon (Psa 29:5-6) and continues to Kadesh, the center of which is Bozrah in Edom. The extermination is quick and complete. The distance from Sirjon in Lebanon to Bozrah in Edom, is 200 miles. This is exactly the distance mentioned in Revelation 14 in a section corresponding to what we read here in Isaiah (Rev 14:20). In both parts it is about the wine press of the total, unsparing anger of God. The harmony of the various parts of Scripture is clearly illustrated by this.

In answer to the question of the people, the LORD says: "It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." "Who speaks" corresponds to "the voice of the LORD" in Psalm 29 (Psa 29:3-8; cf. Psa 2:5) and "the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse" in Revelation 19 (Rev 19:21). His righteousness will then be revealed in the deliverance of His earthly people.

In verse 2 they ask a new question. The answer of the LORD in verses 3-4 makes the time of the event clear, namely that it is about the definitive destruction of the heathen powers just before the realm of peace. This vivid picture of the treading of the wine press is also described in other parts (Joel 3:9-16; Rev 14:17-20; 19:15).

It is the picture of the oriental wine press. The collected grapes are pressed barefoot, so that the red juice flows out. The garments of the wine presser are therefore smeared with the red juice. It is a picture of God Himself carrying out the judgment. There is also a play on words, because 'Edom' means 'red'. Bozrah, the capital of Edom, is a word related to *batsar* which means 'gathering of grapes'.

Here year and day are set opposite to each other again (cf. Isa 61:2). The time of the vengeance of the LORD is short (Rom 9:28). At the same time, this vengeance is the beginning of an era in which the enemy of Israel has been defeated forever: "My year of redemption has come."

His answer continues in verses 5-6. It appears that He is alone in His great love for His people. No one shares in this with Him (cf. Isa 59:16). Wherever He looks, there is no one to help His people. To His astonishment, He must conclude that there is no one who helps His people. That is why He alone will look after the cause of His people and speak up for them. As a lonely but all-powerful Warrior, against Whom all resistance is utterly useless, He pours out His wrath on His enemies and those of His people. He gives His enemies the wine of His wrath, by which they get drunk and fall down.

### **Isa 63:7-9 | The Faithfulness of the LORD Praised**

*7 I shall make mention of the lovingkindness-  
es of the LORD, the praises of the LORD,  
According to all that the LORD has granted us,  
And the great goodness toward the house of Israel,  
Which He has granted them according to His compassion  
And according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses.  
8 For He said, "Surely, they are My people,  
Sons who will not deal falsely."  
So He became their Savior.  
9 In all their affliction He was afflicted,  
And the angel of His presence saved them;  
In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them,  
And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.*

From verse 7 we read, in a section that goes through to the end of Isaiah 64, what the Spirit of prophecy puts the remnant in the mouth. These words are spoken by the representative of His people at the time of the redemption described in the preceding six verses. In Isaiah 65-66 we find the answer of the LORD.

It is striking to see how the Spirit expresses all the feelings of a faithful Israelite heart, of a frightened yet trusting heart. This heart remembers the lovingkindness of the past. However, it is depressed by the present misery and recognizes the rebellion of which they are guilty. But in spite of all this, it appeals to the unchanging faithfulness of God's love. It is a prayer in connection with the lovingkindness of the LORD which He has shown in salvation. That is why it begins with praise. This language also suits us because of the heavenly and spiritual deliverances and blessings that have been granted to us, in addition to all the earthly mercies that are our part.

This verse begins and ends with the lovingkindness of the LORD, that is, His faithfulness to the covenant based on the work of the Mediator. This word 'lovingkindness', *chesed*, is the faithfulness, the faithful mercies (Isa 55:3) which God in His covenant proves to His people. Contemplating the lovingkindness of the LORD touches the heart of the remnant and leads them to repentance (Rom 2:4).

In verse 8 the remnant takes the words of the LORD in their mouth in which He expresses His appreciation for His redeemed people. This people is the righteous remnant who waited for His salvation in the time of the great tribulation. It says that the faithful remnant are "sons who will not deal falsely". Dealing falsely here means being unfaithful to the covenant with the LORD. They have been faithful in contrast to the many who in apostasy attached themselves to the antichrist. Because of their faithfulness He has become their Savior.

The prophet says in verse 9 how the LORD effected that salvation. In a distant past, when Israel returned to Him with repentance for their sins as a result of the chastening of the LORD, "He could bear the misery of Israel no longer" (Jdg 10:16). Thus, in the coming time of Jacob's distress, His actions will aim both to defeat their enemies and to remove His chastening hand at the appointed time.

This declaration reveals the tender feelings of the LORD. His disciplinary dealings are always done in love (Heb 12:5-11). "For He does not afflict willingly or grieve the sons of men" (Lam 3:33). It grieves Him when they deviate from Him. It grieves Him also when He is forced to chasten them.

Then comes the way in which He acted with His delivering power: "The angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them." Here we do not only think about the future salvation, but also about His actions in the past. The presence of God with His people was in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire and in the tabernacle, and the Angel was none other than Christ Himself (Gen 48:16; Exo 23:20,23; 32:34; 33:2). His presence was more than the mere being present of God in their midst. It meant the revelation of Himself in and through the Angel Who accompanied them.

The picture of lifting and carrying all the days of old calls to mind a section of the song of Moses (Deu 32:10-12). There he recounts God's goodness during their journey through the wilderness.

### **Isa 63:10-14 | Leadership of the LORD**

*10 But they rebelled  
And grieved His Holy Spirit;  
Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy,  
He fought against them.  
11 Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses.  
Where is He who brought them up out of the  
sea with the shepherds of His flock?  
Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them,  
12 Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses,  
Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name,  
13 Who led them through the depths?  
Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble;  
14 As the cattle which go down into the valley,  
The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.  
So You led Your people,  
To make for Yourself a glorious name.*

The grieving of the Holy Spirit is a sin of which we too are warned (verse 10; Eph 4:30). It is one of the proofs that the Holy Spirit is not just a power, for you cannot grieve a power, but He is a Person, for only a Person can be grieved.

The name “Holy Spirit” appears only three times in the Old Testament, while in the New Testament it is common. That is why it is remarkable that in these few verses this Name appears twice. [The third time is in Psalm 51 (Psa 51:11)]. Because of this also the Old Testament believer knows about the existence and work of the Holy Spirit and we can learn a lot from it.

Every sin grieves the Holy Spirit. The people would not deal falsely (verse 8), they would not be unfaithful. Unfortunately, verse 10 shows that the opposite happens and that the people persevere therein. The LORD cannot let that continue. His attitude toward them must therefore change from a loving caretaker who stands up for them, into an enemy who fights against them.

Yet He has always worked with His Holy Spirit in their midst for their benefit. Isaiah reminds the people of this (verses 11-14). These verses present the other side of God’s actions, namely His mercy for them at the time of redemption from Egypt and giving them rest so that His Name becomes “glorious”. Isaiah reminds the LORD of that glorious Name at the end of verse 14, which is the introduction to the prayer that follows.

Isaiah asks where the LORD is, Who led His shepherds, Moses and Aaron, at the head of the people through the Red Sea (verse 11b). It is reminiscent of the Lord Jesus Who, as the One Who was brought back from the dead, is called “the great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20). This is what is presented in the picture in the Red Sea and where Moses is a type of the Lord Jesus as the Shepherd of His people.

The following is a reference to the Holy Spirit, which also reminds of the New Testament, because after redemption from the power of sin and the acceptance of the gospel, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the New Testament believer (Eph 1:13). In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit does not dwell in the believer, but He works in him. Only after the death, resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus did the Holy Spirit come to dwell on earth, in the church and in the believer as a member of the church.

### **Isa 63:15-19 | Distress as a Pleading Ground**

*15 Look down from heaven and see from Your holy and glorious habitation;  
Where are Your zeal and Your mighty deeds?*

*The stirrings of Your heart and Your compassion are restrained toward me.*

*16 For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us*

*And Israel does not recognize us.*

*You, O LORD, are our Father,*

*Our Redeemer from of old is Your name.*

*17 Why, O LORD, do You cause us to stray from Your ways*

*And harden our heart from fearing You?*

*Return for the sake of Your servants, the tribes of Your heritage.*

*18 Your holy people possessed Your sanctuary for a little while,*

*Our adversaries have trodden [it] down.*

*19 We have become [like] those over whom You have never ruled,*

*[Like] those who were not called by Your name.*

Until verse 14, the people looked back on the faithfulness of God and their own unfaithfulness. From verse 15 onward this faithful remnant speaks about their need in the present. The prayer for salvation and deliverance (verse 15) begins with the question whether the LORD wants to look down from “heaven” and see from His “holy and glorious habitation” (cf. 1Kgs 8:44-53).

The question indicates that He Who has been with His people and revealed His presence and power, has withdrawn and can now be approached only in His heavenly abode. His holiness and His glory are especially mentioned because of the contrast with the wickedness and shame of the people. We notice this attitude of distance in what Isaiah says, identifying himself with the people: “The stirrings of Your heart and Your compassion are restrained toward me.”

When God’s people are in distress because of their aberration, God’s actions in discipline are not at the expense of His compassion. The LORD chastises whom He loves (Pro 3:11-12; Heb 12:6). He desires to take away the oppression of His people, but sometimes He has to withhold His mercies. It is remarkable that Isaiah speaks of himself as an object of these acts and in this way identifies himself with the condition of the people. We also see this with Moses (Exo 32:31-32) and with Paul (Rom 9:2-3). Thus it is with every true intercession in times when the people of God are in a spirit of deviation from Him.



The prophet appeals on the same basis in verse 16 to the connection of God with His people. He does not appeal on the basis of the covenant of the law of Moses (verse 11). He appeals on the basis of God's unconditional promises to Abraham (Gen 15:17-18). The LORD has obtained His earthly people through His creative power and loving counsel. He is their Father.

This is not 'Father' in the New Testament sense of the word. In the New Testament the Father is first and foremost the eternal Father of the eternal Son. Then He is also the Father of the believers who have received the Son as their life. They are sealed by faith in the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit and address God through the Spirit as "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:6). In that relationship the believer could only come after the Lord Jesus had finished the work on the cross (Jn 20:17).

Isaiah speaks of the LORD as the Father of His people in the sense of their origin (cf. Isa 64:8; Deu 32:6; Jer 4:3,19; 31:9; Mal 2:10; cf. Exo 4:22; Deu 14:1; Hos 11:1). Abraham and Israel, that is Jacob, are their ancestors, but they have not known of the existence of the people as their descendants. They did not know them, they could not look after them and have mercy on them. Deceased saints cannot be intercessors for anyone.

With the LORD, however, this is quite different. The relationship between Him and His people cannot be dissolved. That is why Isaiah says: "You, O LORD, are our Father." He knows about His people and knows them. He is their Redeemer in the counsels of old and in His gracious acts in the past.

The prayer in verse 17 contains a moving supplication. Isaiah does not put the responsibility with God for the sin of His people. God allows only those who have persistently refused to keep His commandments to go astray. He surrenders them to the consequences of their own chosen path, on which it is impossible to believe and walk in His fear. We have a clear example in Pharaoh (Exo 7:13; 8:19,32; 9:7,12). Only when Pharaoh himself has hardened his heart several times does God harden his heart.

Most of the people have a hardened heart. However, there are some who remain faithful. In view of them, the prophet makes a double appeal. He asks for them as "Your servants" and as "the tribes of Your heritage". The people have only "possessed" the promised land for "a little while" (verse 18). The people have been in exile longer than they have lived in the prom-

ised land. Opponents such as the Babylonians and the Romans have trodden down the sanctuary of the LORD.

“Adversaries” here means the king of the North, the Assyrians, who at the end of the great tribulation will destroy the land and the sanctuary. Isaiah also recognizes that this has made the people equal to the nations (verse 19) and that therefore the LORD had to treat them as the nations.

Believers must take care that they do not forsake the will of the Lord and become conformed to the world. Persistent lukewarmness as in the church in Laodicea will cause them to resemble the unconverted. Then the Lord must retreat and stand outside the door (Rev 3:15a,20a).

## Isaiah 64

### **Isa 64:1-5 | Cry for God's Action**

*1 Oh, that You would rend the heavens [and] come down,  
That the mountains might quake at Your presence —  
2 As fire kindles the brushwood, [as] fire causes water to boil —  
To make Your name known to Your adversaries,  
[That] the nations may tremble at Your presence!  
3 When You did awesome things which we did not expect,  
You came down, the mountains quaked at Your presence.  
4 For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear,  
Nor has the eye seen a God besides You,  
Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.  
5 You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness,  
Who remembers You in Your ways.  
Behold, You were angry, for we sinned,  
[We continued] in them a long time;  
And shall we be saved?*

This chapter continues the prayer of the prophet. He calls to God to manifest His power against His enemies, so that the nations – the king of the North and his allies – will tremble at His presence (verses 1-3). The language recalls the way in which the LORD manifested His presence and power at Sinai. Then the mountain trembled at His presence, He descended upon the mountain in fire; smoke rose as if from a furnace (Exo 19:16-19). By then revealing His Name in this way to His people, He made them tremble. Would He not now reveal His power and judgment to His enemies? He will do so in the end time when the Lord Jesus comes back for His people.

The 'mountains' points to the nations as established powers, while the 'water', like the 'sea', points to the same nations, but in their turmoil and rebellion against the government of God (Rev 17:15). The 'fire' speaks of judgment. This fire will melt the mountains and make the water rise up.

The believing remnant here asks in pictorial language if God wants to judge the enemy.

This prayer is based on the fact of the absoluteness and uniqueness of God and His attributes and of the ways of grace toward those who walk in fear of Him, who keep Him in remembrance and wish to please Him (verses 4-5a). That He meets them means that He comes forward to show them His favor (cf. Gen 32:1). Verse 4 is quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2 (1Cor 2:9), but he can add: "For to us God revealed [them] through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God" (1Cor 2:10). We may already see in faith the future things He has prepared for those who love Him. The same is true for the believing remnant later on.

What God has prepared for His own, we could never have heard – "perceived by ear" – from previous generations. Tradition could not tell us that. Nor had we ever discovered it through our own observation – "nor has the eye seen" it. It has only become known to us through the revelation of God through His Spirit, through which we now know.

For an unbeliever who does not possess the Spirit of God and can only rely on his thinking, it is unthinkable that the LORD would act for the benefit of His people Israel. Israel has chosen the antichrist as his king, the temple has been desecrated by the abomination of destruction, the people have been massacred and the land has been destroyed by the attack of the king of the North. But the faithful remnant counts on the faithfulness of God to His promises. God's action in favor of the believing remnant is beyond our logical thinking. These counsels of God are purposed only for those who through faith trust Him, who love Him.

The three-part combination of "rejoices", "righteousness" and "remembers You" (verse 5a) has a special meaning. It is possible to walk in righteousness by adhering strictly to religion without *rejoicing* in the Lord. It is possible to do *righteousness*, to do what is morally right, without really *remembering* God Himself.

The Lord rejoices in those who know from experience what fellowship with Him is. His eye is on those who fear Him. Enoch walked with God and thus received the testimony that he pleased God (Gen 5:22-24; Heb

11:5). He rejoiced in Him. As a result, his life of testimony in a wicked world ended in his passing into the direct presence of God.

The trust of the faithful remnant is based on the acknowledgment that the people have failed and sinned, first by rejecting Christ and then by receiving the antichrist. Thus, the remnant acknowledges that God is righteous to judge them. At the same time, through faith, they expect salvation from the same God, Who is faithful to His promises. This is expressed in the following verses.

In verse 5b Isaiah acknowledges the guilt of his people both in the past and in the future. When he recalls the centuries-long condition of their apostasy, he expresses it questioningly: “And shall we be saved?” The sentence can best be understood as a question. It is not about ‘ways’, but about a sinful state in which the people have been for “a long time”. In this rhetorical question lies the acknowledgment that they have no right to deliverance.

#### **Isa 64:6-7 | Acknowledgment of Iniquities**

*6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,  
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;  
And all of us wither like a leaf,  
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.  
7 There is no one who calls on Your name,  
Who arouses himself to take hold of You;  
For You have hidden Your face from us  
And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities.*

They have all become unclean (verse 6). What they first considered to be righteous deeds for themselves, their orthodoxy, they now acknowledge that for the LORD it is only a filthy garment. Only when they acknowledge this they can put on the “robe of righteousness” which the LORD gives them (Isa 61:10). They have come to the conclusion that they have all fallen off as foliage and that their iniquities have carried them away from the LORD like the wind.

All this provides a warning regarding the consequences of a persistent deviation from the ways of God. Conscious apostasy leads to a forgetting of God. This is how it is in Israel. There is no one who invokes His Name, no

one who arouses himself to take hold of God (verse 7). Insensitivity to sin causes insensitivity to God's rights and His mercies. The consequence of their apostasy is that God has withdrawn His mercies from them, hidden His face from them, and consumed them in their iniquities.

### **Isa 64:8-12 | The LORD and His People**

*8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father,  
We are the clay, and You our potter;  
And all of us are the work of Your hand.  
9 Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD,  
Nor remember iniquity forever;  
Behold, look now, all of us are Your people.  
10 Your holy cities have become a wilderness,  
Zion has become a wilderness,  
Jerusalem a desolation.  
11 Our holy and beautiful house,  
Where our fathers praised You,  
Has been burned [by] fire;  
And all our precious things have become a ruin.  
12 Will You restrain Yourself at these things, O LORD?  
Will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?*

In the reality and the power of confession in the previous verses, the prophet recalls the inalienable connection which the LORD established between Himself and His people. He also recalls the way in which He formed them as their "potter" (cf. Jer 18:1-6; Rom 9:19-21) according to His own counsel (verse 8). This is true humility and brokenness (Isa 57:15). This confession implies the possibility of a re-creation of the depraved national vessel. This will certainly be the case when the Redeemer comes to Zion.

It's not that far yet. The people sigh under the chastening hand of the LORD to Whom they desperately cry for a reduction of anger (verse 9). The remnant reminds the LORD in a pathetic way that they are after all His people. After all it is about His people, His land, His Name. The enemy is admitted under the repaying hand of God to make the cities of the land a wilderness and Jerusalem a desolation (verse 10). The abode of God in Zion, where the songs of praise to the honor of the LORD used to sound,

has gone up in flames (verse 11). In verse 12 we hear the prophet's closing plea for deliverance and restoration. The answer comes in the next and last two chapters of this book.

In the short term, the destruction by Babylon is a pre-fulfillment of these prophecies. However, its full fulfillment will take place in the future when Israel is destroyed by the coming king of the North.

## Isaiah 65

### **Isa 65:1-7 | Invitation of the LORD**

*1 "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask [for Me];  
I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.  
I said, 'Here am I, here am I,'  
To a nation which did not call on My name.  
2 "I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people,  
Who walk [in] the way which is not good, following their own thoughts,  
3 A people who continually provoke Me to My face,  
Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks;  
4 Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places;  
Who eat swine's flesh,  
And the broth of unclean meat is [in] their pots.  
5 "Who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me,  
For I am holier than you!'  
These are smoke in My nostrils,  
A fire that burns all the day.  
6 "Behold, it is written before Me,  
I will not keep silent, but I will repay;  
I will even repay into their bosom,  
7 Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of  
their fathers together," says the LORD.  
"Because they have burned incense on the mountains  
And scorned Me on the hills,  
Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom."*

The answer of the LORD to the questions of the faithful remnant in the previous chapter we find in this chapter and especially in verses 8-9. The condition of the people was so bad, that an explanation of the judgment that struck them is needed first. So stubbornly and ceaselessly they resisted the grace of God.

Paul quotes verses 1-2 in Romans 10 from the Septuagint. There we see that he uses verse 1 to apply this verse to the nations (Rom 10:20). Under



the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, the great apostle of the nations used this verse for them, while quoting verse 2 to illustrate the apostate state of Israel (Rom 10:21). By quoting both verses, Paul links the acceptance of the nations to the disobedience of Israel (cf. Acts 13:46).

The acceptance of the nations takes place in our time, the time of grace. It will also take place in the future. Then the gospel of the kingdom will be preached and a multitude who no one can count will accept that gospel.

In the section that follows, verses 3-4 present a terrible revelation of the idolatrous practices of God's people, by which they offend the LORD. As a result, Israel falls short of receiving the blessings that the nations have received.

To "sit among graves" probably has to do with a form of spiritism that tries to get in touch with the dead. They go to the cemeteries at night to consult evil spirits instead of asking the LORD. In doing so they defile themselves in a gruesome way.

Those who commit these atrocities boast, as usual, of their special holiness and keep the uninitiated at a distance by posing themselves as inaccessible to others (verse 5). They claim a false holiness. Their whole behavior is a stench to the LORD. It fills the measure of their sins and calls for the most serious just repayment (verses 6-7).

Here we see Phariseeism at full length reaching its lowest point in the crucifixion of Christ. Today this doctrine of holiness is also present in professing Christianity. We see it there, where separation is demanded out of a claim of superior holiness, an 'I am holier than you' attitude.

All their evil deeds are recorded in a book of remembrance before Him (cf. Rev 20:12). He forgets nothing of it and will punish every atrocity with an absolute just judgment. The same goes for the faithful who may also know that there is a book of remembrance (Mal 3:16). In it all faithfulness is mentioned, which will also be rewarded absolutely justly.

### **Isa 65:8-10 | A Remnant and Hope**

*8 Thus says the LORD,  
"As the new wine is found in the cluster,*

*And one says, 'Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it,'  
So I will act on behalf of My servants  
In order not to destroy all of them.  
9 "I will bring forth offspring from Jacob,  
And an heir of My mountains from Judah;  
Even My chosen ones shall inherit it,  
And My servants will dwell there.  
10 "Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks,  
And the valley of Achor a resting place for herds,  
For My people who seek Me.*

Contrary to the foregoing, the LORD now makes mention of the believing remnant, of those who are His faithful servants, for the sake of whom He will not bring general destruction on the people (verses 8-10). Up to these verses the LORD speaks of 'them' in distinction from the penitent who speaks out for Him. Now the LORD is going to speak about the remnant, why this is valuable to Him. Those who are a foreshadow of the God-fearing remnant in the future at the time of Jacob's distress are like a ripe cluster of grapes in the midst of a depraved vineyard producing sour grapes. From this cluster will come new wine, which indicates the joy that this remnant is to God's heart.

God sees this remnant in the midst of general unfaithfulness. In the midst of all unfaithfulness, the LORD will bring forth "offspring from Jacob, and an heir of My mountains" [that is the land of Israel, cf. Eze 6:2-3] from Judah; even My chosen ones shall inherit it, and My servants will dwell there". The heir from Judah is above all the Messiah, but also the remnant as united with Him. This remnant is a seed, a nucleus, which will grow into a new great nation in the realm of peace.

In this context, in verse 10 two places are mentioned in particular. "Sharon" is the plain with rich meadows and famous for its flowers (Isa 35:2) and "the valley of Achor" is the valley of hope (Hos 2:15). The whole area will become a garden of the LORD, a scene of fertility and productivity for those who humble themselves before God because of the sin that has taken place. There is always hope for those who humble themselves in God's presence and seek to walk in fear before Him (Psa 33:18; 39:7).

**Isa 65:11-16 | The Unfaithful and the Faithful**

11 *"But you who forsake the LORD,  
 Who forget My holy mountain,  
 Who set a table for Fortune,  
 And who fill [cups] with mixed wine for Destiny,  
 12 I will destine you for the sword,  
 And all of you will bow down to the slaughter.  
 Because I called, but you did not answer;  
 I spoke, but you did not hear.  
 And you did evil in My sight  
 And chose that in which I did not delight."  
 13 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD,  
 "Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry.  
 Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty.  
 Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame.  
 14 "Behold, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart,  
 But you will cry out with a heavy heart,  
 And you will wail with a broken spirit.  
 15 "You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones,  
 And the Lord GOD will slay you.  
 But My servants will be called by another name.  
 16 "Because he who is blessed in the earth  
 Will be blessed by the God of truth;  
 And he who swears in the earth  
 Will swear by the God of truth;  
 Because the former troubles are forgotten,  
 And because they are hidden from My sight!*

In verse 11 the prophecy returns to the guilty ones who are addressed in a threatening way in verses 1-7. They have left the LORD. They do not think of worshiping Him. Instead, they have accepted the antichrist (Jn 5:43) and surrendered to idolatrous sacrificial meals in honor of the "beast". Two objects of worship are called: "Fortune", the god of fortune or Jupiter, and "Destiny", the god of fate or Venus.

Thus, even now, there are countless people who believe that you should be lucky in life and that life is ruled by fate, either good or evil. They believe

that gods like Fortune and Destiny control their lives. For one they set a table and for the other they fill cups with mixed wine. That table is an idol table and the drinking cup is that of the demons.

Paul may have thought of this when he writes down what we read in 1 Corinthians 10 (1Cor 10:20-21). It is like an idolatrous unholy supper dedicated to demons. It is recognizable in professing Christianity where many heathen elements are integrated in the celebration of supper. This is particularly present in the roman-catholic church, which is called “a dwelling place of demons” (Rev 18:2).

Consistent with this, the LORD declares that He will destine – a word containing the thought of ‘fate’ – them for the sword. The sword used by the LORD as an instrument is here the king of the North and his, Arab or islamic, allies. Just as they bow to their images for their happiness, so they will have to kneel down to be slaughtered (verse 12).

Through the use of the same words, in this statement of the LORD resounds irony. He says that it is not fate that destines their destiny, but He! And He has been so patient to them. He has called, but they have not answered. He has spoken, but they have refused to listen and deliberately chosen what displeases Him.

In verses 13-16 the LORD vividly presents the contrast between these faithless and His faithful who walk as He pleases. The unfaithful crowd did not listen when the LORD cried, but these faithful servants, those connected with the true Servant, the Servant of the LORD, did listen. The LORD stands up for His servants. With the call “behold” he points the disobedient to them. His servants shall eat and drink and rejoice and sing for joy, while those who turned away from the LORD shall suffer want, and shall know shame and fear and brokenness of spirit (verses 13-14).

The name of the wicked will become a curse (verse 15). This refers to the oath pronounced by the priest to a woman suspected of adultery, whom he had to make drink the bitter water bringing the curse (Num 5:21-24), because Israel acted like an adulteress. In contrast with this, the LORD will call His servants by another name. That name will be a blessing (verse 16).

That blessing is linked to “the God of truth”, literally “the God of the amen”. That points to God as the God Who fulfills His Word and will

fulfill the promises of His covenant. For us and all believers of all times, all promises of God in Christ are “yes” and “amen” (2Cor 1:20; cf. Rev 3:14). In the coming day, the redeemed people will stand firm in a powerful and uninterrupted connection with the LORD.

This makes clear the folly, meaninglessness and sinfulness of going our own ways, carrying out our own plans and pursuing things that God does not like, instead of listening to His voice and rejoicing in doing His will. Through our walk with God He fulfills, and will fulfill, all the promises of His Word. He joyfully responds to the trust in Him by adding an ‘amen’ to His assurance. An obedient heart and a trusting spirit give peace and the enjoyment of the sunshine of His face and of a holy fellowship with Him.

The LORD gives the assurance that the former troubles, i.e. the great tribulation, a time of distress for Jacob (Jer 30:7), will be forgotten and hidden from His eyes (verse 16). Instead, in the following verses He predicts the unspeakable blessing and joy that will be ministered to the redeemed Israel in the coming millennial day.

### **Isa 65:17-25 | Heaven and Earth Renewed**

17 *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;  
And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.*

18 *“But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;  
For behold, I create Jerusalem [for] rejoicing  
And her people [for] gladness.*

19 *“I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people;  
And there will no longer be heard in her  
The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.*

20 *“No longer will there be in it an infant [who lives but a few] days,  
Or an old man who does not live out his days;  
For the youth will die at the age of one hundred  
And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred  
Will be [thought] accursed.*

21 *“They will build houses and inhabit [them];  
They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.*

22 *“They will not build and another inhabit,  
They will not plant and another eat;*

*For as the lifetime of a tree, [so will be] the days of My people,  
And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands.*

*23 "They will not labor in vain,*

*Or bear [children] for calamity;*

*For they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD,*

*And their descendants with them.*

*24 It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the LORD.*

The new heavens and the new earth concern this creation that will be renewed (verse 17; Psa 104:30b) when the curse has been removed and the creation has been freed from corruption (Rom 8:19-21). It is a renewed state of heavens and earth created by God (Gen 1:1; Isa 51:16). It is a re-creation to the state of paradise. This old creation will become like new in the realm of peace.

The new heavens and the new earth mentioned in the New Testament come after the old creation is burned with fire (2Pet 3:11-13; Rev 21:1). There it is about a material change, whereas here it is about a change of living conditions. There is also talk of a new heaven because satan will then have been cast out of heaven (Rev 12:7-12) and his power will have been removed from it forever. He will still rage on earth for a brief time, but after three and a half years he will be locked up in the abyss for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3).

Isaiah speaks of new heavens and a new earth as an area of unparalleled blessing. There will be no more reflection on the former oppressions, such as the great tribulation. For the creation of a clean heart (Psa 51:10) the same word is used as for the creation of new heavens and a new earth. This clean heart must absolutely precede the new creation (2Cor 5:17; cf. Gal 6:15).

When the LORD establishes His kingdom of peace and righteousness, He will fulfill what is written in the following verses. It is a section that perhaps more than any other part of Scripture describes the prosperity and blessing of that coming time. This description of the Messianic realm of

peace is the fulfillment of all promises made to Israel. The LORD calls us to rejoice and rejoice forever in what He is about to create regarding Jerusalem on earth (verse 18). It will no longer be a mourning city, but a city of joy.

This joy is also the own joy of the LORD in a situation established by Him (verse 19). Where His joy is heard, there is no room for sorrow or struggle. Though there will still be death and sin, evil will be under His absolute control and an immediate judgment will follow open sin (verse 20; Psa 101:8; Zep 3:5). This is also proof that the new heavens and the new earth of the realm of peace are not yet the perfect state of eternity.

The longevity of the earliest times of human history will be back. "The youth ... at the age of one hundred" indicates a slowing down of the aging process. If someone will die at that age, he should be considered to have been struck by the curse of God because of a sin. In any case, the born-again believers will complete the thousand years. They live longer than the people before the flood, of whom Methuselah – as far as Scripture tells us – was the longest living with 969 years (Gen 5:27).

The following promises, in verses 21-23, give the assurance that His people will rejoice in the results of their work. They will reap the fruits of their labor and enjoy them themselves. The harvest will not fall into the hands of plundering enemies. The duration of their lives will be the same as that of trees that grow centuries old. They will be an offspring blessed by the LORD and their children will share with them what they enjoy, without being taken away by a premature death (cf. Job 21:8).

The LORD declares that He will answer them before they call, and that He will hear them before they speak (verse 24). The prayers are answered directly because they are the expression of His thoughts (cf. Isa 30:19). They emerge from the fellowship with Him that will be there then. Now, often there is a certain time between the prayer and the answer given (cf. Dan 9:20-23), but this will no longer be the case. This provides a striking testimony of what will be the result of the personal presence of the LORD in their midst.

There will also be a change in the nature of predatory animals (verse 25). The condition described here is not the result of evolution, but of the pow-

er of the Messiah. The conditions in nature are still in disarray now, but then the wolf and the lamb will graze together. The food of the cow will also be the food of the lion.

This section recalls in a condensed form what the prophet said earlier (Isa 11:6-9). This is another proof of the unity between the two main parts of the book which is disputed by liberal theologians.

Exception in this section is the serpent that will have dust to food (Gen 3:14). The serpent will continue to go on its belly. Not everything in the realm of peace participates in blessing. The serpent continues to refer to satan. But the serpent will no longer be able to do any harm, for everything is under the control of the ruling Messiah.



## Isaiah 66

### Introduction

The last chapter of Isaiah is at the same time a climax and summary of the prophecies of Isaiah. The opening section of this chapter is a continuation of the glorious vision of the future in the previous chapter. However, the great point of connection with the previous chapter is the contrast between the true and faithful servant of God and the apostate and worldly character of the majority of the nation.

God protests against the latter and their ideas to establish a temple in Jerusalem. There are forms of sacrifice that the LORD hates. One form is idolatry, in which sacrifices are made to idols. The other form is that in which people come to Him, but with an untruthful, hypocritical heart or out of rut and no more than tradition.

### Isa 66:1-4 | Reprehensible Temple Service

*1 Thus says the LORD,  
"Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.  
Where then is a house you could build for Me?  
And where is a place that I may rest?  
2 "For My hand made all these things,  
Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD.  
"But to this one I will look,  
To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.  
3 "[But] he who kills an ox is [like] one who slays a man;  
He who sacrifices a lamb is [like] the one who breaks a dog's neck;  
He who offers a grain offering [is like one who offers] swine's blood;  
He who burns incense is [like] the one who blesses an idol.  
As they have chosen their [own] ways,  
And their soul delights in their abominations,  
4 So I will choose their punishments  
And will bring on them what they dread.*

*Because I called, but no one answered;  
I spoke, but they did not listen.  
And they did evil in My sight  
And chose that in which I did not delight."*

As Creator of heaven and earth He does not need anyone to build a house for Him (verse 1). He is not looking for people who are only after a beautiful building. In the end time the unbelieving Jews will rebuild the temple. There the antichrist will put an image of the beast. There will be animal sacrifices again and religious festivals will be celebrated in the then rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. All this will take place under the protection of an alliance with the restored Roman Empire, the united states of Europe. But the LORD does not value this outward form service.

People who only have an eye for outer forms, are also there today. When people come who do not love Him, a temple means nothing to Him (cf. Jer 7:4). In this sense, Stephen also speaks to the Sanhedrin in his speech to make it clear to them that they have preferred the symbol to the reality of a relationship with God (Acts 7:44-54). They place religion above relation.

The LORD looks to the one who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at His word (verse 2). From those who do not have these characteristics, He expects no action to build the temple or that they come to bring offerings. With a scathing judgment the LORD makes it clear that the sacrifices of the hypocritical worshipers are to Him like committing gross iniquities (verse 3).

To Him, killing an ox while they have an untruthful heart is like killing a human being. Likewise, the sacrifice of a lamb or a grain offering without humility is to Him equal to the bringing of an unclean animal like a dog or blood from a swine. To Him, the tribute that they think they bring to Him means that they praise an idol.

They have chosen to follow the path of the heathen with their horrors. To this the LORD answers that He will make a choice and that He will take their deceitful deliberations and will bring on them what they fear. He does so because they did not answer when He called and they refused to listen to His words (verse 4).

In the time after the rapture of the church and before the coming of Christ to earth, the faithful remnant of Israel will again proclaim the gospel of the kingdom (Mt 24:14), both to the people and to the entire world. But even then, the mass of the people refuses to repent.

### **Isa 66:5-6 | Mockers Will Be Put to Shame**

*5 Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word:  
 “Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name’s sake,  
 Have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy.’  
 But they will be put to shame.  
 6 “A voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple,  
 The voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to His enemies.*

In verse 5 the LORD turns again to the minority consisting of those who tremble at His word out of reverence and awe. They live in deep awe of every word of Scripture. This should also characterize us.

This minority proclaims the gospel of the kingdom to the people of Israel, but they will reject the message, yes, they will get an aversion to the messengers of the gospel. In addition, after about three and a half years, a man will rise up with wonders and signs who will be accepted by the people as their king and their christ (Jn 5:43). He is called the antichrist by Scripture. Together with the leader of the restored Roman Empire or the united states of Europe, he will unleash a terrible persecution against the believing remnant. Many will perish in the process.

Finally, the antichrist will set up an abomination of destruction in the temple in Jerusalem, causing the faithful to flee and leave Jerusalem (Mt 24:15-27). The persecution will be terrible. What makes the persecution extra tough is that the persecutors are not only the nations, but also the antichrist, the false king of Israel and the mass of the unbelieving and apostate people of Israel.

The LORD promises the believing remnant that He will deal with their brethren who have hated and persecuted them, increasing the abomination of their sins. They have ventured with mocking unbelief to abuse the name of the LORD and to challenge Him to show His glory. These apostates regard any hope in God as pure deception.

The LORD has decided to put them to shame. The city and the temple are in ruins – caused by the king of the North – but there will come a time when there will be noise in the city again and a voice will be heard in the temple, “the voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to His enemies” (verse 6). These are not only the enemies in the Jewish people, but also the nations and peoples conspiring against the LORD and against His Anointed (Psa 2:1-2). When the LORD was as the Lamb on earth, He did not open His mouth (Isa 53:7), but now it is different (cf. Rev 19:15).

### **Isa 66:7-11 | A New Birth and Joy**

7 *“Before she travailed, she brought forth;  
Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy.*  
8 *“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?  
Can a land be born in one day?  
Can a nation be brought forth all at once?  
As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.*  
9 *“Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery?” says the LORD.  
“Or shall I who gives delivery shut [the womb]?” says your God.*  
10 *“Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her;  
Be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her,*  
11 *That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts,  
That you may suck and be delighted with her bountiful bosom.”*

With the return of Christ, the nations are judged and the believing remnant of Israel is redeemed. It is now time for the Person of Christ to be revealed to the people.

In view of this, verse 7 mentions the future time of Jacob’s distress – “travail” over the people through the antichrist – and the fact of the coming of Christ in the flesh. This experience of the people contrasts with the circumstances of a natural birth. There first come the travail and then the birth. Here the order is reversed and that provokes the question of verse 8.

There is a clear connection with the first verses of Revelation 12 (Rev 12:1-6). There the people are presented as a woman and are said to have given birth to a male Child. That refers to the Lord Jesus. The Roman power, under the inspiration of satan, has been ready to devour the Child, as is

written in Revelation 12 (Rev 12:4), and thereby fulfilled what is written there. Herod would have killed the Child, as soon as the woman had given birth to it, if he had been able to do so. But the male Child was caught up to God and His throne. This refers to the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, which have already taken place.

The death and resurrection of Christ are passed over here. The ascension is the result of the rejection of Christ by the people of Israel. So, the people have met Christ before. The era of Christendom is hidden in the Old Testament and is therefore passed over here. The great tribulation is still future and is presented here as a direct result of the rejection of Christ. This explains the reversal of the natural order of the circumstances of birth as Isaiah suggests, that the birth is there before the travail comes.

The following questions in verse 8 point to the consequence and outcome of the people's travails. These two questions should be answered positively, while the first two questions should be answered in the negative. The answer is given at the end of the verse. Then there is first travail and then birth. That is a difference with the foregoing, where it was about Christ. In agreement with travail and birth we see that the result of the great tribulation is: God's earthly people as a nation in peace, joy and justice under the mighty hand of his Messiah and Deliverer.

That is why the Lord Jesus calls this era "the regeneration" (Mt 19:28). It is not about the national restoration of the people of Israel, but about the spiritual restoration of these people. The people must be distinguished from the "boy" in verse 7.

In summary we find here two births and one travail. The first birth is of Christ and the second of the faithful remnant. Between these two births we find the one travail, that is the great tribulation. The period of two thousand years between the ascension of Christ and the great tribulation is not included here.

Verse 9 gives the certainty that the LORD will finish His work. After the travail, the birth will follow. He will complete the birth of the people. In view of that birth which takes place when He delivers His people from their time of unprecedented tribulation, there follows a call of the LORD to all who rejoice in Him and His purpose. All who love His earthly peo-

ple may rejoice with Jerusalem and rejoice over her (verse 10). Those who mourn her wretched condition, deprived of children, are invited to rejoice with her. Those who are so concerned with her in the time to come will have the benefit of it when she is established on earth.

In verse 11 Jerusalem is presented as a mother who brings forth children and nurses them personally. Thereby there is left enough for others, so that she is also a source of blessing for all those outside Jerusalem who come to her. She is not the source of blessing herself, but derives all blessing from the LORD.

### **Isa 66:12-14 | Jerusalem, Source of Comfort and Growth**

*12 For thus says the LORD, "Behold, I extend peace to her like a river,  
And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream;  
And you will be nursed, you will be carried  
on the hip and fondled on the knees.*

*13 "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you;  
And you will be comforted in Jerusalem."*

*14 Then you will see [this], and your heart will be glad,  
And your bones will flourish like the new grass;  
And the hand of the LORD will be made known to His servants,  
But He will be indignant toward His enemies.*

The LORD declares that He will extend peace to her like a river (verse 12). Israel will receive the riches of the nations who will take care of the people with the greatest devotion and attentiveness (cf. Isa 49:23; 60:4). Jerusalem was destroyed by the king of the North, but now the Lord Jesus comes to Jerusalem with the believing remnant. Thus begins the restoration of the land, the full fulfillment of the year of jubilee (Lev 25:8-13), or the "period of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21).

In verse 13 the LORD explains how He Himself will care for His people in Jerusalem with motherly care. God is father and mother at the same time. The result of that care is that their hearts will rejoice and their bones (body) will flourish like young grass (verse 14). This is a vivid description of the prosperous state of Israel when the LORD rules over the earth. It is a state of perfect peace (Isa 32:17-18).

The last part of verse 14 makes it clear that no power of the enemy will be able to threaten this peace, for His indignation is public toward His enemies.

### **Isa 66:15-17 | The LORD Comes to Judge**

*15 For behold, the LORD will come in fire  
And His chariots like the whirlwind,*

*To render His anger with fury,  
And His rebuke with flames of fire.*

*16 For the LORD will execute judgment by fire  
And by His sword on all flesh,  
And those slain by the LORD will be many.*

*17 "Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go to the gardens,  
Following one in the center,  
Who eat swine's flesh, detestable things and mice,  
Will come to an end altogether," declares the LORD.*

The blessing of the previous verses is the result of defeating their enemies against whom the LORD will act with indignation (verses 15-16). To this end He will appear in consuming glory.

In verse 17 the LORD deals with those of His people who have corrupted themselves and become worse than the nations. They practice things that are horrible in the eye of the LORD. Their sanctification and cleansing is an idolatrous ritual. "Gardens" are the areas where they commit idolatry (Isa 65:3-4). "One in the center" is some idol to which they sacrifice and which is central to their lives. The sacrificial meal they have in the process consists of food that God has declared abominable (Lev 11:41-42).

They will disappear. They will share in the fate of the followers of the antichrist. The judgment that will come on them will take place in "the great wine press of the wrath of God" (Rev 14:19).

### **Isa 66:18-21 | An Offering for the LORD**

*18 "For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all  
nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory. 19 I will set a sign  
among them and will send survivors from them to the nations: Tarshish, Put,*

*Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations. 20 Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. 21 I will also take some of them for priests [and] for Levites," says the LORD.*

By way of contrast, the prophecy turns again to the future of Israel and the favorable treatment of them by the nations in the realm of peace. The statement that the LORD knows their works and their thoughts is a transition from the apostates in verse 17 to the redeemed people and the way in which the nations will support them. All nations and tongues will be gathered to Israel and there they will see the glory of the LORD (verse 18; Mt 25:31-33).

For this purpose, the LORD will set a sign among them and that for the restoration of His people in distant places. What this sign is is not told. Most obvious is that this sign is the sign of the Son of Man (Mt 24:30). Perhaps we can also think of a certain form of supernatural intervention in the world by judging the enemies of Israel, as He did through the ten plagues at the deliverance of His people from Egypt (Exo 10:2; Psa 78:43; 105:27). It is a sign that will not be misunderstood.

In any case, the LORD makes it clear here that He will send the survivors on their return as messengers to the nations from which they have come (verse 19). They will go to all parts of the world, to nations that have not heard the tidings about Him and have not seen His glory, so that they may make His glory known all over the earth. He sends His messengers to Tarshish in the west, to Put and Lud in the south, to Tubal and Javan in the north, and to the distant coastlands, possibly in the east.

As a result, many of these nations will pretend to pay homage to the LORD (Psa 66:3b; Mic 7:16-17). The nations will bring the Israelites "from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD" (verse 20; cf. Rom 15:16). They will be brought to His holy mountain Jerusalem, just as the children of Israel used to bring their offerings in clean vessels to the house of the LORD.



God's people come to Jerusalem from the nations with a wide variety of means of transportation, including the airplane (cf. Isa 60:8).

The people who come look like clean vessels. They are cleansed from their sins and brought to a walk in the ways of the LORD. Thus He will be able to take out of them as priests and Levites (verse 21), as God purposed His people to be at the exodus from Egypt (Exo 19:6a).

### Isa 66:22-24 | Worship and Horror

22 *"For just as the new heavens and the new earth  
Which I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD,  
"So your offspring and your name will endure.*  
23 *"And it shall be from new moon to new moon  
And from sabbath to sabbath,  
All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the LORD.*  
24 *"Then they will go forth and look  
On the corpses of the men  
Who have transgressed against Me.  
For their worm will not die  
And their fire will not be quenched;  
And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind."*

Isaiah ends his prophecy with a striking contrast. The people of Israel will continue to exist in offspring and name, as sure as the new heavens and the new earth, because they are inextricably connected with Christ (verse 22). Because of His presence in their midst all that lives will come to worship Him every new moon and every sabbath (verse 23; cf. Zec 14:16). "All mankind" are the survivors of all the nations that have gone up against Jerusalem.

The contrast between what they come to *do* and what they will *see* is great. When the nations come to worship God, they will see an everlasting reminder of the terrible nature and consequences of rebellion against God (verse 24). The bodies of the enemies of Israel will be brought to a valley east of the Dead Sea, "the valley of Hamon-gog" (Eze 39:11). It will be a monument as a warning for the enemies of God.

The picture of fire used here is taken from the valley of Hinnom, just outside of Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus refers three times to this valley, where the garbage from Jerusalem was burned, to warn for the eternal fate of every unrepentant (Mk 9:43-47). He thus gives it an application that goes beyond the thousand years realm of peace and makes it a picture of hell, "the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev 21:8).

Nevertheless, despite this warning sight, a spirit of dissatisfaction over the just and benevolent government of the Lord Jesus will take hold of the nations. As a result, at the end of a thousand years, the nations will rebel against Him when, under the permission of God, satan is released from his prison to mislead them (Rev 20:7-8).

No purely natural circumstances, however peaceful and blessed they may be, can give new life to a human heart. This new life, together with absolute adherence to Christ, must always be based on faith in the value of His atoning blood.

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